

WE DEMAND:

**THE PEOPLE
SHALL GOVERN**



**The politics of participatory
local governance: the case of
Stellenbosch Municipality**



The front cover is designed by Mathias Theissen and is based on a poster (downloaded from www.nelsonmandela.org) from United Democratic Front's consumer boycott in the Western Cape in 1985.

THE PEOPLE SHALL GOVERN?

*The politics of participatory local governance:
the case of Stellenbosch Municipality*

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May 2009

Acknowledgements

There are many people who need to be acknowledged for helping me through my master studies on time. First and foremost I am grateful to my informants; without you there would be no thesis. I hope that my work will do you justice. Special thanks goes to Nikki Du Plessis at the Department of Strategic Services at Stellenbosch municipality for opening doors and facilitating meetings.

I am truly grateful to my supervisors, Marianne Millstein and Kristian Stokke, for excellent guidance throughout the thesis process. Kristian's academic work on South Africa has been an inspiration since I first discovered human geography. Marianne has been indispensable in the process of making sense of my experiences in the field and translating them into an academic framework. Thank you for urging me to strive towards reaching my full potential.

I am also most grateful to the Nordic Africa Institute, Department of Sociology & Human Geography (UiO), and the South Africa Programme at the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights (UiO) for providing me with scholarships to conduct fieldwork and fulfil the thesis.

A big thank you to Justin Sylvester, Camilla Solvang Hansen, Mathias Theissen and Alan Roberts for reading through and commenting on drafts of my thesis, as well as proof-reading the final version. Thank you also to my fellow students at human geography for stimulating discussions *and* silly conversations over lunch or a beer. It would not have been the same without you!

Camilla and Justin: Thank you for letting me crash on your sofa, taking me wine tasting, lending me your friends and contacts, being my private chauffeurs, making me laugh, and engaging me in mind expanding conversations during my fieldwork.

Last, but definitely not least, I am eternally grateful for having such a wonderful family and amazing friends (who might as well be family) who challenge and encourage me. You're my inspiration.

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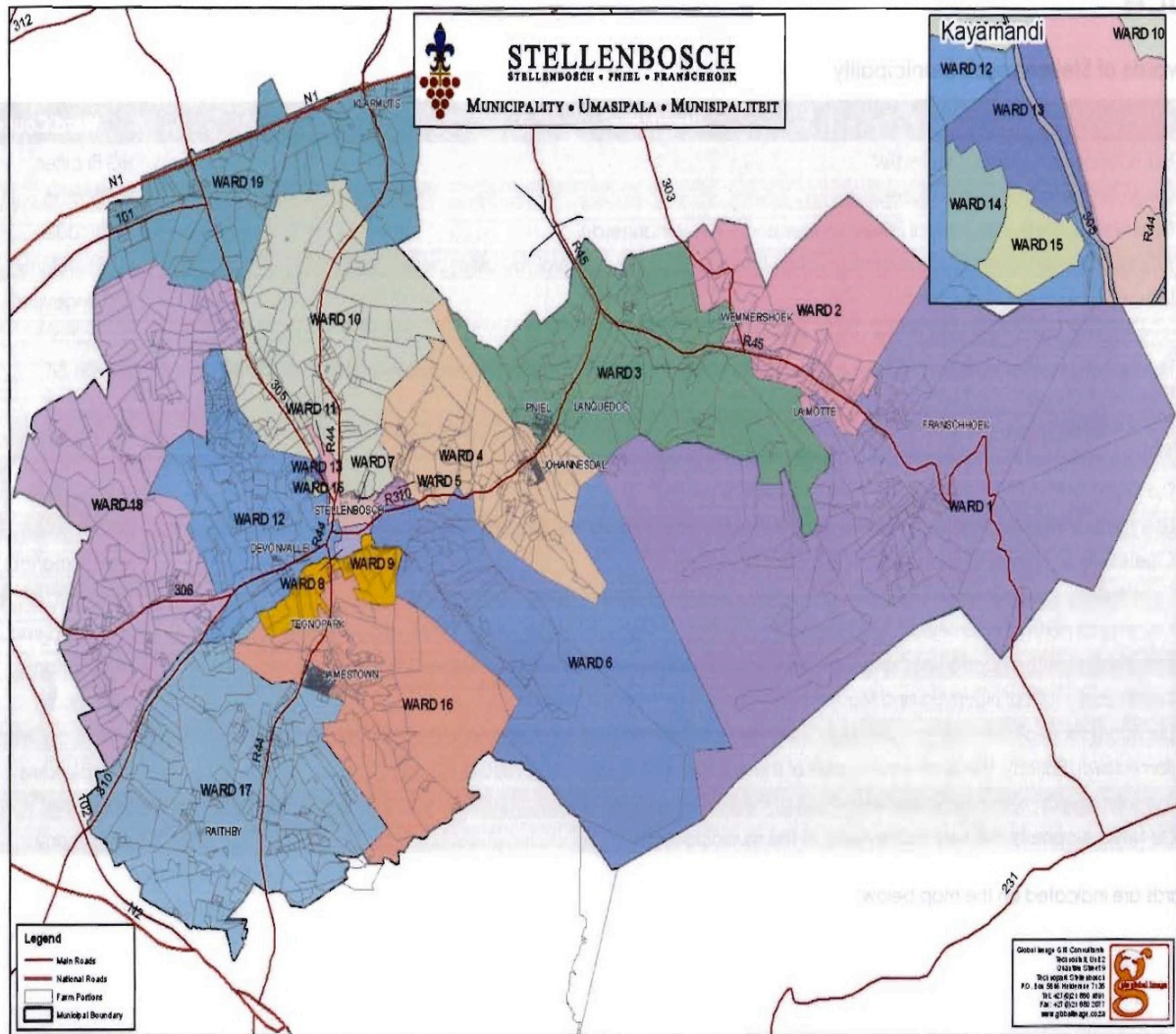
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List of abbreviations

ACDP	African Christian Democratic Party
ADF	Area Development Forum
ANC	African National Congress
BLA	Black Local Authority
CDW	Community Development Workers
COPE	Congress of the People
DA	Democratic Alliance
DP	Democratic Party
DPLG	Department of Provincial and Local Government
EPG	Empowered Participatory Governance
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution
ID	Independent Democrats
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IDP RepForum	Integrated Development Plan Representative Forum
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KCA	Kayamandi Civics Alliance
NNP	New National Party
NP	National Party
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
REDS	Regional Electricity Distribution System
RGDP	Regional Gross Domestic Product
TNC	Trans-National Corporation
UDM	United Democratic Movement
WB	World Bank

Map of Stellenbosch municipality wards



1. Introduction

The objective of this thesis is to study the politics of participatory governance processes at the local scale in South Africa. The fall of apartheid in 1994 marked the starting point for the building of a new democratic society. The South African state faced enormous challenges in addressing the structural inequalities transmitted from the apartheid era. A new constitution was designed, and it has later been celebrated as one of the most progressive constitutions in the world. In addition to civil and political rights, extensive socio-economic rights have been granted, including the right to health care, housing and basic services. In reality, these rights have proven difficult to access for the majority of the population.

The main responsibility for carrying out the intensions of development and participatory democracy in the constitution has been given to the local government through the concept of *Developmental Local Government* (DLG). DLG has two main goals: increased efficiency in service-delivery and public participation in decision-making and implementation. However, this ambitious agenda has been accompanied by limited autonomy and resources to local authorities. Consequently, there has been a massive increase in popular protest over the failure of service delivery and disappointment with local government.

The case study in this thesis is the politics of public participation in integrated development planning (IDP) in Stellenbosch Municipality in the Western Cape province. This case is interesting because Stellenbosch is one of the few municipalities that seemingly have been successful in implementing the ward committee system. The ward committees constitute the most important institutional structure for citizen engagement with the state, hence it is vital to understand the politics, that is the power relations, embedded in this structure. These relations are ultimately what decide if the provided democratic spaces give real meaning to people.

Research questions

The title of the thesis, *The People Shall Govern? The politics of participatory local governance: the case of Stellenbosch Municipality* is inspired by the Freedom Charter

adopted by the Congress of the People in 1955. The Congress of the People was organised by a non-racial alliance and the Congress united the liberation movement. The result of the Congress is written in the Freedom Charter, which sets out the vision for a liberated South Africa. The second section of the charter states that:

THE PEOPLE SHALL GOVERN!

Every man and woman shall have the right to vote for and stand as a candidate for all bodies which make law;

All people shall be entitled to take part in the administration of the country;

All rights of the people shall be the same, regardless of race, colour or sex;

All bodies of minority rule, advisory boards, councils and authorities, shall be replaced by democratic organs of self-government.

These principles were the core of the liberation struggle in South Africa and continue to guide the new democratic dispensation. This leads me to the research questions of this thesis:

- 1) What characterise the institutional spaces for local public participation in South Africa and how are they constructed?
- 2) How does the politics of participatory processes play out in Stellenbosch Municipality?

The first research question relates to the historical role of local government and the subsequent transformation of these institutions into the main actors for development and democratisation in the post-apartheid context. The second research question examines the power relations in these institutions and how these shape the nature and outcome of public participation.

The objective of the thesis is relevant for several reasons. The theoretical approach focuses participation in local processes of democratisation. Democratisation has seldom been at the forefront of a research agenda in human geography. Issues of governance and democracy have mostly been left to political science which is less interested in contributions from scalar and spatial analysis. In addition, the theoretical

foundation has been heavily biased towards research on Western cities and there is a need for a more thorough research on the dynamics of cities in the global South (Millstein 2008). Similarly, the existing research agenda on participatory governance in South Africa has mostly been concentrated on the larger metros, such as Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg, resulting in a lack of research on smaller cities.¹ The case of Stellenbosch municipality aims at addressing both of these gaps in order to gain a deeper understanding of public participation at the local scale. The thesis now turns to placing developmental local government in broader political and socio-economic context in order to provide a background for the research questions the thesis is founded on.

Contextualising Developmental Local Government

The South African state faces two main challenges; to create a globally competitive economy and locally improve standards of living for its citizens, especially for previously disadvantaged groups. Although these processes may seem to take place on different geographical scales, they are highly interrelated and interdependent. In order to achieve these objectives new governance mechanisms, which include a restructuring of the public sector and the participation of private and civil society non-state actors in governance, are pursued by government. These developments take place within a context of globalised processes of international trade, foreign direct investment (FDI), and the activities of trans-national corporations (TNCs), which exert pressure on the South African state to liberalise, deregulate, and privatise the its economy, as well as through the everyday struggles of local communities to access their social, political, and economic rights (Mhone & Edigheji 2003).

Heller (2001) explains how favourable preconditions for establishing local democratic practices, such as a capable state and a democratically mobilised society, have had to give way to concerted political centralisation, the expansion of technocratic authority, and a shift from a democratic to a market mode of accountability. He argues that these developments may be explained by the pressure of globalisation, however such an explanation can be questioned, as South Africa has

¹ Consultation, Sophie Oldfield, 15.10.08

not been subjected to formal structural adjustment programmes. In addition, the relatively low levels of foreign debt, high levels of domestic capital, significant foreign currency reserves, a diversified manufacturing base, and substantial natural resources have made South Africa less dependent on global financial and commodity markets than most developing economies.

The increasingly technical focus on financial issues in municipal reconstruction is connected to the adoption of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution strategy (GEAR) in 1996. This neo-liberal growth-led development policy replaced the initial redistributive Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). Hence, the government has largely been devoted to streamlining administrative performance and cutting costs, rather than mobilising and engaging citizens in sustained deliberation. Hence, tension between RDP and GEAR will be experience and challenged at the local level in the context of developmental local government (Parnell & Pieterse 2002).

A once strong social movement sector has been co-opted or marginalised by African National Congress's (ANC)² political hegemony, which has given way to a bureaucratic understanding of local government reform. The post-apartheid state was born out of the political imperative of unifying a racially divided society, and the legacy of minority rule strengthened the wish for political centralisation (Heller 2001). However, the issue of empowering the local government sphere enjoys consensus in South African politics, and the ANC support decentralisation as a means of achieving service delivery but also as a tribute to the grassroots organisations' part in the liberation struggle. Developmental Local Government is born out of this imperative.

The infrastructural reach of the apartheid state was extensive and in many areas equal to that of a developed country, thus the ANC inherited strong planning and managerial capacities. However, local government also inherited a legacy of huge

² Having close to 70% support in the 2004 elections, the ANC has had two-thirds majority in Parliament. With the general election in April 2009, ANC lost the two-third majority but still won a comfortable victory.

inequalities in administrative capacities and financial resources across municipalities, as well as the challenge of merging historically under-resourced black townships and wealthy white municipalities. Nevertheless, local government was mandated to carry out participatory planning through the process of integrated development planning. Although the impact of this process is under-researched (Harrison 2008), case studies show that IDP has largely served as "instruments for exerting political and bureaucratic control and as vehicles for marketization, rather than as institutional spaces for democratic participation" (Heller 2001:144). In this sense Stellenbosch Municipality stands out as a case. It has won prizes for its IDP and is held as a best practice example when it comes to public participation. Community input is organised through the development of ward plans by the ward committees and connected to municipal budget processes.

Despite the strong institutional capacity of Stellenbosch municipality, the extent to which different communities within its boundaries have access to this institutional space is highly unequal. The persistence of the importance of race, and following the importance of present socio-economic status, creates inclusion for some communities and the exclusion of others. As such, the case looks at three different areas within Stellenbosch municipality and their respective influence and capacity to participate in local government; namely the historically white town area and the surrounding coloured community of Cloetesville and the black African community of Kayamandi.³ In the extension of the issue of race, party politics play a vital role in understanding these participatory processes. Stellenbosch municipality is divided in half between party political support for the ANC and the main opposition party, the Democratic Alliance (DA), with one vote controlling the balance of power in the municipal council. This has led to frequent changes in the governing structures of the municipality, which in turn creates an unstable and unpredictable political environment. Consequently, the politics of local participatory governance should be placed at the forefront of a research agenda concerned with deepening democratic space.

³ In this thesis I use the Statistics South Africa terminology for ethnic/racial groupings, i.e. African (black), Coloured and white. I wish to point out that I do not support this classification *per se*, but these were and are categories used in the policy discourses of repression and reconstruction (van Donk et al. 2008).

Structure of the thesis

Following this introduction, the methodological approach undertaken in the research project is accounted for. The methodology chapter explains the implications of taking critical theory as a point of departure in terms of the researcher's positionality and interpretation of empirical data. A discussion on the different stages of the research project leads to an investigation of the challenges of analytical generalisations based on a qualitative case study.

In my theoretical framework, chapter three, I argue that in order to understand local governance processes in the South, there is a need to look at decentralisation practices and how these have been shaped by global, national and local discourses on development and democratisation. The spaces for public participation at the local scale are constructed through institutional design, however the nature of these spaces is determined by the politics embedded in them. In other words; the power relations within the structures are ultimately what create inclusion and exclusion in participatory processes and further decide how democratic citizenship practices are.

The analysis is organised in two chapters in accordance with the research questions. Chapter five deals with the construction of institutional spaces for local public participation in South Africa. Developmental local government is born out of the imperative of transforming the previously segregationist role of local government into an integrated and democratic governance actor. The demographic composition of Stellenbosch municipality, and the Western Cape province as a whole, creates an explicit politics of race illustrating the persistent inequality in social, political and economic relations. The introduction of ward-based planning in Stellenbosch municipality poses a great opportunity for a continuous decentralised public participation in local institutions for decision-making and implementation. However, it will be argued that the lack of any substantial political decentralisation challenges the effectiveness, influence and legitimacy of the ward committees.

Chapter six looks at the politics of public participation in Stellenbosch municipality. Special attention is given to the role of ward committees in providing an interface between the municipality and the community. The rationale behind ward-

based planning is a bottom-up approach to planning, and to further ensure a fair distribution of resources throughout the municipality and promote the principles of developmental local government. This notion is challenged by unequal power relations based on political party affiliation, capacity, and racial identities between the different communities, the community and its ward councillor, and between the ward councillor and municipal administration and council.

Finally, the concluding chapter draws on insights from all the chapters in order to answer the research questions. In addition, the challenge of analytical generalisation is revisited in the light of the case of Stellenbosch municipality and discusses to what degree the case can contribute to an understanding and preview of other situations.

2. Methodology

Qualitative research is characterised by close contact between the researcher and those who are being studied. This poses a series of methodological and ethical questions in terms of how the research is carried out. The main objective of qualitative research is to come to an understanding of social phenomena, and the way the researcher interpret and analyse these phenomena will therefore be of the highest importance (Thagaard 2003).

This chapter accounts for the methodological choices I have made during the research process. It starts out by presenting critical theory as the philosophy of science guiding this research project and the subsequent use of abduction as analytical approach. The qualitative case study method is introduced, before sources and methods of data collection are discussed. Fieldwork was conducted in Stellenbosch municipality during October and November 2008 and I have triangulated interviews, document analysis and observation. Central to this discussion are the implications of my positionality in the field. The chapter finishes off with reflections on the challenge of analytical generalisation, as well as the ethical considerations made in the research process.

Philosophy of Science

Interpretation of the qualitative text is connected to the researcher's understanding of tendencies in the empirical data during the data collection process. At the same time, the researcher will be influenced by his or her theoretical point of departure. The choice of which interpretation approach to apply will therefore affect what kind of information the researcher seeks. Different philosophies of science will highlight different understandings of construction of significance and meaning, which in turn will influence methodological choices in the research design.

My thesis is influenced by a critical theoretical approach. This starting point has implications for my view of what constitutes knowledge as well as how I

understand my position as a researcher. I wish to clarify the understanding that underpins my research by placing it within this tradition, hence knowledge cannot be regarded as something that is naturally given or objective. So follows that my pre-understanding will influence my analysis and positionality.

Critical Theory

Choosing critical theory as a philosophical point of departure involves applying a hermeneutic interpretation of data. This approach focuses on identifying a deeper meaning behind people's actions than might seem obvious at first sight. Hermeneutics argue that there is no *real* truth; rather, phenomena can be interpreted on different levels. The implication is that it is impossible to study a phenomenon outside its context; it can only be understood in connection to the context it is a part of (Thagaard 2003).

Interpretations of the first degree take place when the researcher analyse a situation on the basis of his/her own experience of that specific situation, while second-degree interpretations relate to how the researcher analyses the informant's understanding of him/herself. The latter interpretation involves a *double hermeneutics* because the researcher analyses information already interpreted by the informant. Critical theory applies *triple hermeneutics* by advocating the need for revealing the hidden or underlying cause of an action through theory (Thagaard 2003). Critical theory emphasises the exposure of ideology and has a critical attitude towards the prevailing power structure. The research focus is directed at disclosing processes that favour some interests over others, which involves regarding social phenomena as political processes. In this regard, science holds the possibility of having an emancipatory effect, as the marginalised will benefit from a critical investigation of existing structures. Critical theory serves as a counterweight to the idea of science as an objective discipline. If science is treated in an apolitical (objective) manner the only function it will serve is to reproduce existing power structures (Alvesson & Sköldberg 1994).

Critical theory also challenges the researcher's own ability to critically examine the social processes that he/she is a part of and to a large extent takes for

granted. The researcher's pre-understanding in terms of experiences and academic training will influence the interpretation of the empirical material. The researcher needs to understand that he/she works within an ideological and political context where "the research [...] is included in a tense dynamic between reproduction/strengthening of the existing social structure and a critical look at the same structure" (Alvesson & Sköldberg 1994:222, my translation).

Critical theory has been criticised for not providing any methodological tools for empirical research. Critical theory operates with a high level of abstraction because of its focus on meta-theoretical questions. However, efforts have been made to reduce the gap between theory and data within critical theoretical research. One of these efforts involves the use of abduction as research method because of its dialectic character (Alvesson & Sköldberg 1994). I will now turn to a discussion of abduction and how it has been applied in my own research.

Critical theory in practice: Abduction

The researcher's pre-understanding will influence the analysis and consequently affect the evolvement of theory. Qualitative research is often said to be inductive in nature, which means that theory is developed from collected data. This is based on the idea that accumulation of empirical studies can form a basis for theoretical perspectives. The opposite is often true in quantitative research where knowledge is based on deductive logic where empirical data is used to test theoretical statements. Abduction is located in between these modes of inference and highlights the dialectic relationship between theory and empirical data (Thagaard 2003). In this sense, established theory will form a point of departure for the researcher, while patterns in the empirical data will provide the foundation for new theoretical perspectives:

"Abduction is to move from a conception of something to a different, possibly more developed or deeper conception of it. This happens through our placing and interpreting the original idea about the phenomenon in the frame of a new set of ideas" (Danermark et al. 2002:91).

Another way of explaining abduction is to describe it as a process of recontextualisation; a process that "describes, interprets and explains something

within the frame of a new context” (Danermark et al. 2002:91). An important part of the recontextualisation exercise is to understand society from a historical perspective. This is especially important in a South African context where the history of racial segregation still informs the current political situation. Theoretical perspectives on participation and theories of democratisation and citizenship give meaning to the collected data, and inform the case of public participation in Stellenbosch Municipality. Through placing the empirical data within this theoretical framework, the case is engaged in a process of recontextualisation and further development of theory.

Positionality

How the researcher affects the research situation is connected to the position the researcher has in relation to the informants. When carrying out interviews or observation, external characteristics like gender and age will impact on how the informants perceive the researcher. It is important to always reflect on how this relationship affects the information that is made available to the researcher (Thagaard 2003).

In the 1980s, the idea that different cultures could be assimilated and “become one” was replaced by an increased focus on “multiculturalism” where different cultures could coexist. At the same time, a move towards putting in place a collective identity at the national scale was evident in Western countries’ efforts to create insiders and outsiders of the nation state (Mohammad 2005). Post-colonial and feminist scholars, operating in a critical tradition, were demanding the acknowledgement of social differences created by gender, race, sexuality, and class relations. This critique highlighted the unequal power relationships that exist in society because of social differences and sought to create a voice for those groups who were marginalised as a result of these differences. It was also a critique of the positivist notions of objectivity, neutrality, and reliability which underpin distance as a protective measure against bias in the research field and process. Feminist research shows that the positivist objectives are myths; all knowledges are embedded, situated, specific and

therefore partial, with an inevitable bias (Haraway 1988). The researcher is part of the social world and cannot be separated from his or her own knowledge. Likewise, the quest for neutrality conceals the subjectivity in collected and coded “knowledge”. A more ethical research would then entail making visible the invisible to reveal the situatedness and avoid invalid generalisations. As described in Rose (1997), self-reflexivity in the research process has been vital in order to be aware of my own positioning in the field and to see my place in the relations of power.

The researcher’s attachment to the environment that is being studied, in terms of being an insider or outsider, will also affect positionality. The insider/outsider distinction refers to the boundary marking an inside from an outside; identity, social position and belonging are dependent on which side of the boundary the researcher is placed (Mohammad 2005). Skelton (2005) argues that in cross-cultural research, the researcher needs to acknowledge and respect differences. This includes reflecting on how these differences will impact on the research while at the same time take responsibility for the differential power relationship between researcher and the researched. Issues of race and gender are aspects that are especially important to be aware of in cross-cultural research (Skelton 2005). As a white, and perceivably affluent, young woman from Europe I experienced a pressing need to reflect on the above issues. South Africa’s past of racial segregation has created a society that makes it impossible not to deal with the issues of race and socio-economic status in a research setting. The particular history of Western Cape and Stellenbosch, with the preferential treatment of the coloured population and influx control on black Africans, has led to the politics of race becoming more explicit in this area than in other provinces in South Africa (Millstein 2008).⁴

My position in a research setting was mostly that of an outsider. I do not share the history of my informants and come from a different cultural context. However, because I am a European, the white community to some extent identified with my background, which made me more of an insider in this setting. Similarly, this reinforced my outsider role in the coloured and African communities. Although I am

⁴ For a more comprehensive discussion on the politics of race see chapter 4.

white I was to a certain extent treated with exemption because I was from “overseas” and therefore not a South African. I was then somewhat excluded from racial categorisation and treated more as guest. Most of the time I was met with curiosity and goodwill because people appreciated that I took an interest in their situation. This outsider role suited me well when I was trying to get access to informants in Cloetesville and Kayamandi. At the same time I wanted to express that I knew a lot about the South African society from periods of living in the country and because of my South African descent (my father is South African), in order to find a common ground. This positioning reflects the power dynamics inherent in the South African society. I could have played my “insider card” more strongly but I believe that this would have placed some limitation on my access to the non-white communities. As such, the legacy of apartheid is still visible in the way people construct identities and the concurrent social and political roles attached to those identities.

The qualitative case study

There is currently no standard definition on what constitutes a case study. However, it is possible to point out some commonalities in how different scholars frame the concept of case study. Gomm and Hammersly (2000) claim that the term case study relates to the number of cases under investigation and the amount of detailed information collected about the case(s). Case study research would then be characterised by the examination of a few cases, often only one, and involves an in-depth investigation of these cases. These cases are constructed out of naturally occurring social processes. Stake (2005) argues that a case creates its own “bounded system” which determines what is, or is not, the case. In other words, there is a pattern of activities and a coherence which are inherent to the case. According to Yin (2003), it is suitable to engage in a case study strategy when *how* and *why* questions are being posed. In addition, the investigator should have little or no control over the events taking place in the case, and the focus is on a contemporary real-life phenomenon. The strength of the case study is apparent in its ability to produce descriptions that are “complex, holistic and involving a myriad of not highly isolated variables” (Stake 2000:24) and thus provides a contextual understanding of a phenomenon. The *how* and *why* questions therefore deal with operational links traced

over time rather than random incidents (Yin 2003). The object of analysis could be focused on one or more units representing the study and these units could be persons, groups or organisations (Thagaard 2003). A main advantage of using case study as a research strategy is that it opens up for the use of several qualitative methods ranging from document analysis to personal interviews and observation (Yin 2003)

Yin (2003) makes a distinction between different kinds of cases and their purpose. He divides case study research into exploratory, descriptive and explanatory cases. An exploratory case study is often a preliminary study which guides further research efforts. A descriptive case study aims at describing the case in its context, while an explanatory case study seeks to understand the causal relationships inherent in the case. Similarly, Stake (2005) argues for making a main distinction between intrinsic and instrumental case studies. An intrinsic case study is undertaken first and foremost because the case in itself is interesting with its particularities and ordinariness. When a case is selected because of its ability to provide insight into a particular issue or redraw a generalisation, it is called an instrumental case study. My case is of an explanatory and instrumental nature because it aims to uncover the case's causal mechanisms in order to serve interests that are external to the context. As such, the case aims at describing processes of inclusion and exclusion in local participatory spaces, which in turn can shed light on participatory processes in other localities.

It must be emphasised that the boundaries between the different categories of cases are fluid which means that intrinsic or descriptive qualities of a case contribute to further a more comprehensive understanding of the question of interest (Yin 2003). In an extension of the point that cases are fluid, Ragin (1992) argues that the case is constantly in development and that the process of defining the case, i.e. casing, is in itself an important part of the research project. The final case of Stellenbosch municipality is a product of this casing process.

Sources and methods for data collection

The case of Stellenbosch Municipality is impossible to separate from its broader socio-economic, historical, and political context. The relational dynamics are present in the history of the Western Cape region and the town of Stellenbosch, and affect the

real life local politics of inclusion and exclusion. In order to address these complex processes I have made use of several qualitative methods: observation, documents analysis and interviews.

Interviews

The qualitative interview is a conversation between the researcher and the interviewee, and provides a basis for the researcher to seek knowledge from the interviewee's experiences and reflections (Thagaard 2003). However, this conversation is not of a reciprocal nature as the researcher to a large extent controls the interview situation by defining the questions and structure of the interview. Still, the researcher also depends on a certain degree of cooperation from the interviewee. This cooperation is negotiated through insider/outsider dynamics that is shaped by power relationships within the context the research is carried out and the consequent positionality of the researcher.

Kvale (2001) argues that an interview can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured. The structured interview creates a setting where both the questions and their order of appearance are decided in advance, like the questionnaire. This may be a preferred strategy if the researcher needs to compare several interviews. The negative consequence of structuring an interview like this is that relevant information may get lost. The best way of avoiding this would be to embark on the opposite strategy of an unstructured interview. This allows the interviewees to bring up their own themes and reflections, which may illustrate important dimensions that the researcher has missed. This approach is often used as a preliminary to a larger research project. Semi-structured interviews operate somewhere in between these two extremes and can be described as a combination of questionnaire and dialogue. This allows flexibility for the researcher but at the same time it ensures that the most important questions and aspects are getting sufficient attention.

I started out my fieldwork with a relatively structured interview guide. As the fieldwork progressed I realised that all interviews have their own dynamics. As Kvale (2001) highlights, the interview is professional conversation that has as its main objective to obtain descriptions of the interviewee's lifeworld in order interpret the

described phenomena. As such, the outcome of the interview depends on the interviewer's conversations skills and the ability to create a gentle "ask and listen approach" that can extract thoroughly tested knowledge. I found that the topics in my interview guide were still valid but that both the order of the topics and ways of talking about the topics differed from interview to interview. The interviews quickly took on a semi-structured form and the interview guide was adjusted before each interview to reflect the different categories of interviewees. This suited my case well, as I was not necessarily interested in comparing specific questions but at the same time I wanted to make sure that I covered the same topics. Interviews were conducted with stakeholders occupying the same position in three different localities within Stellenbosch municipality. The choice of drawing interviewees from Town, Cloetesville and Kayamandi was informed by the very different characteristics of these communities. The history of Stellenbosch has created a highly unequal power relationship between the different communities and as such affects their capacity to participate as well as their influence in these processes. However, the case study aims at understanding Stellenbosch municipality as a whole and the analysis is therefore structured according to specific themes. When attempting to understand the politics of participatory spaces in Stellenbosch the issue of race and socio-economic status that are reflected in the geographical segregation of communities within the municipality cannot be ignored.

Sampling and recruitment of informants

Qualitative research is based on *strategic* samples, which determine whom the researcher acquires information from. A strategic sample is selected on the basis of which informants hold qualities or qualifications that are of strategic value for your research questions. There are different strategies available when selecting your sample. I have used *quota sampling* for my case study. Quota sampling refers to samples that have predefined categories that guide the selection of informants in each category (Thagaard 2003). In my case I operated with five different categories: local government officials, ward councillors, ward committee members, community stakeholders and academics/scholars based on my understanding of stakeholders in public participation. Still, these categories form a convenience samples as the informants are chosen because of their availability and not by random selection

(Thagaard 2003).

I conducted 24 interviews during October and November 2008, of these were 8 from local government administration, 5 ward councillors, 7 ward committee members, 2 non-governmental organisations, and 2 academics.

Upon my arrival in Stellenbosch I contacted a senior lecturer at the School of Public Planning and Management at Stellenbosch University, Francois Theron, and a professor at the Department of Environmental and Geographical Science at the University of Cape Town, Sophie Oldfield, to discuss my case and identify possible sources of information. Theron introduced me to a gate opener at Stellenbosch Municipality, who gave me access to the Department of Strategic Services, which organises community participation within the municipality. This allowed me access to IDP review meetings with wards organised by the municipality in mid-October. The meetings were held with clusters of wards according to geographical area. I attended meetings in the Stellenbosch town wards (6 wards), Cloeteville (2 wards) and Kayamandi (3 wards). It was the second review of the Stellenbosch 5 years Integrated Development Plan. These meetings were a great way of observing how the municipality engaged with the ward committees and other invited stakeholders. The meetings proved to be an effective way of recruiting informants as I had direct access to ward councillors, ward committee members and community stakeholders. In addition, representatives from all the departments in the municipality attended these meetings.

I reflected repeatedly on being introduced to the community through the municipality. In the meetings in Town and Kayamandi I was introduced by municipality officials and in Cloeteville by one of the ward councillors. On the positive side it gave me legitimacy as a serious researcher and everybody in the meeting knew why I was there. This would strengthen the idea of informed consent. It also resulted in people approaching me for a conversation. On the negative side, by being introduced by the municipality it is possible that I was perceived as an official, thus giving the impression that I was aligned with the municipality. This could potentially have negative impact on my positionality in proportion to the interviewees

as it is assumed that the ward committee members have less power relative to the ward councillors and the municipal officials. I tried to emphasise my role as a foreign student and outsider to avoid this impression.

When interviewing ward councillors and ward committee members in Town and Cloeteville I experienced that most of the time people were very open and interested in talking to me. In most cases contact details on people in all the different categories were easily available either online or through Strategic Services. Most of the ward councillors I recruited directly at the IDP review meeting and when I contacted other possible interviewees by phone or email they remembered me from the meeting. In some instances I needed to be approved by other authorities. One of the ward committee members that I had approached via e-mail contacted the ward councillor to confirm that the request was sincere. On several occasions I had to be introduced directly through local government officials in order to get access to administration and council in the municipality. This illustrates a power dynamic that is grounded in political affiliation. The interviewees needed to locate my position before they would agree to talk to me. It is also an indication on how the local administration and council is structured as to who is conceived to be “important” enough to be granted access to the inner circle of local government.

Some of my informants were identified and recruited by using *the snowball method*. The snowball method refers to the approach of first contacting a few persons who exhibit the desired qualities and qualifications and then let them lead you to your next informant (Thagaard 2003). A challenge by using this method is that your sample may consist solely of people from the same network. By using different methods in recruiting informants, I have made sure that this bias is eliminated in my research.

During my fieldwork the political climate intensified in the area. A new political party, the Congress of the People (Cope), was formed by defectors from the ANC. Because of both Western Cape and Stellenbosch's rather volatile political balance the introduction of the new party made an impact. For me, this meant that I had some

difficulties in recruiting interviewees in Kayamandi as people were afraid to be exposed. With some help from my interpreter and some contacts in the municipality I managed to reach some ward committee members and community organisations, although, these data may be influenced by the sensitive politics at the time. That being said, the fact that this issue surfaced has given me important insight into the community politics of Kayamandi. However, my intention was to do a more extensive investigation of Kayamandi by interviewing people from the community. This idea stemmed from the notion that the demographic composition of Stellenbosch reinforces the politics of race, which in turn impacts on the participation of ordinary citizens. Black communities are historically the most marginalised and therefore more politicised. This leads to the assumption that the citizens of black communities will face the greatest challenges in terms of capacity and influence in local government. I was interested in seeing if this has led to more invented spaces of citizenship in Kayamandi. Unfortunately, the political situation at the moment of fieldwork did not allow me to pursue this objective as far as I would have liked. Meanwhile, the use of data triangulation has to a certain degree made up for these shortcomings in the empirical material.

Recording and transcribing

In order to avoid losing valuable information I chose to record the interviews (Thagaard 2003). I was aware that using a tape recorder could disturb the communication during the interview or create a more formal setting than desired. However, I felt that the tape recorder gave me more freedom when interviewing, and the presence of the tape recorder never felt limiting. As I did not have to worry about getting everything down on paper, I could pay full attention to the conversation which allowed me room for visual communication with the interviewee and enough time to think about follow-up questions. I always asked if the interviewee was comfortable with the tape recorder before using it. When the interviewee expressed hesitation about the tape recorder I abstained from using it, which occurred in three of the interviews.

During and after my fieldwork I have transcribed all the interviews. This was a good way of internalising data and eased the task of categorising and analysing the

empirical material. By recording and transcribing interviews you also embark on a process of decontextualisation. The first decontextualisation occurs by recording as you lose all visual information like body language. The data is further taken out of context when the interview is transcribed and all audio information is removed. Information that can be read through intonation, sarcasm, or hesitation is difficult to transcribe. The final stage of decontextualisation takes place through coding and categorisation, and by the use of quotes to illustrate theory (Magnusson 2008). The process of decontextualisation illustrates the practice of abduction, and the implications of using this method is elaborated on in the section on analytical approach below.

Language barriers and use of interpreter

Stellenbosch is an area consisting of mostly Afrikaans and Xhosa speaking groups, although most people also speak English well. In conversations or interview situations the use of English posed few challenges. This allowed me to be independent of an interpreter and have direct access to information from the interviewees. However, during meetings I relied on other participants for *ad hoc* translation as the meetings were held in Afrikaans or Xhosa. This has obviously affected the quality and coherence of the interpreted information. It is also worth noting that interviewing people in their second language could make them feel more restrained and have bigger difficulties in expressing their views properly. However, there was only one interview where I experienced this as a problem.

Two situations involved the use of an interpreter. As mentioned earlier, accessing informants in Kayamandi turned out to be a challenge. I decided that I needed an interpreter to help me negotiate access and navigate in the community. I chose a young and educated male interpreter that was a resident in Kayamandi and at the same time familiar with the research process. It was important that he was perceived as neutral in terms of politics because of the politicised climate. I also felt that having a male interpreter was a factor that gave me more respect in certain interview situations. The methodology literature discusses the importance of the researcher's

gender. When researcher and informant are of the same gender it can create a platform of common understanding. Even so, most of the literature focuses on female researchers and male informants as the interviews can take on a gender dichotomising character. In these situations the male interviewee may use this to accentuate his masculinity (Lundgren in Thaagard 2003).

The Xhosa interpreter was present during interviews even though they were conducted in English. In the interview situation the interpreter was mostly used to clarify when something was unclear. In general, he was also a much-appreciated cultural guide.

The second situation involved the use of an Afrikaans interpreter, which was an official from the municipality. I was supposed to have a focus group interview with the community development workers (CDWs)⁵ from Kayamandi and Cloeteville organised by the before mentioned official. The focus group interview was cancelled and instead it turned into two different interviews at the respective CDW offices. I only found this out at the day the initial focus group interview was scheduled. This resulted in me being escorted to the respective CDW offices by the official, who also insisted on being present during the interviews. I was nervous about how this would affect positionality with the interviewees but to my surprise they seemed very open and honest. It seemed that the official was trusted and seen as an allied. This became evident when the CDWs did not want the interview to be recorded but had no problems with the official's presence. The official was not working with the CDWs on a daily basis and had no stake in the information they provided in the interview. In Cloeteville the official also performed the duty as interpreter in parts of the interview. As this interview took place at the end of my fieldwork I had picked up enough Afrikaans to understand large parts of the interview without interpretation though I was not able to speak Afrikaans. Having an interpreter there eased the conversation while I also felt that I could control that the translated information was correct. I understand that the interpreter's presence may have influenced the informants but I as I have explained I am confident that the effect was minimal.

⁵ CDWs are community-based resources persons/officials accountable to government

Documents and secondary literature

Thagaard (2003) claims that document analysis is a widely used method in qualitative research, often in combination with interviews or observation. Documents are defined by having been developed prior to the research project and is written for another purpose. When analysing documents, it is vital to have in mind which context the documents were developed in. Documents can be defined as private documents, such as diaries and letters, or as public documents like policy documents or annual reports. A distinction is made between open or closed documents, which affect how accessible they are (Thagaard).

Besides collecting data from interviews and observation as accounted for above, I also acquired relevant documents and literature on public participation cases in South Africa. Some of the documents and literature were available prior to my fieldwork such as South African legislation on public participation and case studies on IDP, socio-economic rights and public participation in the Western Cape, which includes Piper & Deacon (2008) *Party politics, elite accountability and public participation: Ward committees in the Msunduzi Municipality*, Davids (2005) *Voices from Below* and Visser (2001) *Social Justice, Integrated Development Planning and Post-apartheid Urban Reconstruction*.

During my fieldwork I was able to access valuable political documents specific for Stellenbosch Municipality. Most important was the *Stellenbosch Integrated Development Plan 2007-2011* and ward plans (2008)⁶ for all the individual wards. In addition, drafts of *Public Participation Strategy Stellenbosch Municipality (May 2008)* and *Annual Report Stellenbosch Municipality (October 2008)* were made available to me through the municipality. After the completion of my fieldwork the *Draft Stellenbosch IDP 2009* was made available for public comment on the municipality's website.

⁶ Ward plans from wards in Town and Cloetesville were translated from Afrikaans to English by a bilingual student at Stellenbosch University.

Analytical approach

Analysis of data is a continuous process throughout the research project. Processing and analysing data is connected to the categorisation and classification of the empirical material, but an even more vital aspect is the representation and reconstruction of data that is taking place. Thus, the constructed representation may be as significant and powerful as the actual collected data (Ragin 1994). Seen in relation to my positionality the arguments presented in the thesis should therefore not be considered the objective truth.

It is argued that analysis can be used to test a theory or develop new theories (Kvale 2001). I spent a lot of time before the fieldwork to study theoretical perspectives and available case studies on local governance and participation. However, given the concentration of research on this subject on the large metros of South Africa, the information on smaller cities, such as Stellenbosch, was limited. As such, the theoretical framework was adjusted after the completion of fieldwork and reviewing the data that was gathered. This illustrates the dialectic relationship between theory and empirical data (Thagaard 2003), where the theoretical framework affects the collected data and *vice versa* (Ragin 1994).

I have used *issue-focused analysis* to present my material which involves a comparison of the information from all the informants according to specific issues. This allows me to delve deeply into every theme that is subject of analysis. A challenge with using this method is that the information is separated from its original context. In order to maintain an overall picture it is important to use the information in connection with the text it originally was part of (Thagaard 2003). As way of structuring huge amounts of information I started by doing a broad categorisation according to themes in the statements from the transcribed interviews. I did not want to categorise in detail as this would lead to fragmentation of the stories told. I found it more useful to relate to the main messages in each of the interviews, especially since my informants were recruited from very different roles and positions within the social and political setup of the case study area. Interpretation refers to a process of re-contextualisation within bigger pictures which may be provided by the entire interview, broader material, or theory (Kvale 2001). The interpretation has been

continuous since the conduct of my first interview and both the theoretical framework and the analysis have been developed through constantly revisiting transcripts, field diary, documents and theoretical perspectives.

The challenge of analytic generalisation

Case study research has been criticised for producing particular knowledge which is not suitable to make generalisations from. Lincoln and Guba (2000) argue that the role of science is not necessarily to find universal “laws” and always arrive at a generalisation. In fact, they claim that the concept of statistical generalisation in itself is problematic. First of all, it depends in the assumption of determinism. This separates the case from time and space, reducing it to a context-free environment, ignoring the fact that “there are always (logically) multiple possible generalizations to account for any set of particulars, however extensive and inclusive they may be” (Lincoln & Guba 2000:31). However, case study research is in many instances aiming to transfer knowledge of the particular to a larger setting, especially when the case study is of an instrumental character. This kind of generalisation has been labelled *analytical generalisation* and implies that case studies are generalisable to theoretical propositions, rather than to populations or universes (Yin 2003). The transferability, or external validity in Yin’s terminology, of the case will then be determined by how successfully the researcher provides a justification for how the case can contribute to an understanding, and preview, of other situations (Kvale, 2001, Thagaard 2003, Yin 2003). The case of public participation in Stellenbosch municipality’s instrumental character derives from its aim of providing insight into the politics of local participation. Stellenbosch municipality is seemingly a successful case within a research agenda that has been focused on the shortcomings of public participation processes in local government. The theory informing the case study will then serve as critical framework for the analysis of the politics of participation in Stellenbosch. Similarly, the abductive approach makes it possible for the dialectic interaction between theory and empirical data to contribute to the continued development of theory within this particular field of research and enhance the explanatory power of the case.

Reliability

The reliability of a research projects relates to how *dependable* the research is, in other words, whether the collection and interpretation of data is reliable (Thagaard 2003). Yin (2003) highlights two aspects that determine reliability. Firstly, it is important to save all the research material and secondly, to create a chain of evidence. Concerning the first premise I have saved all the recording and transcripts of my interviews, field notes, documents, and literature used in my thesis. When it comes to creating a chain of evidence I argue that by using data triangulation I have been able to single out misleading information. Since a qualitative case study opens up for the use of several methods I have chosen to collect data through interviews, observation, policy documents and research documents. Hence, data triangulation refers to investigating a phenomenon from different angles in order to determine its exact position. This has provided me with a wider spectrum of information and strengthens the validity of the scientific argument (Kvale 2001, Thagaard 2003). Technically speaking, if the research is reliable, it should be possible for another researcher to conduct the same case study over again and arrive at the same conclusions as me by following the same procedures that I have described (Yin 2003). Because qualitative research is conducted in open system, this is in reality not possible to achieve but it illustrates how transparent and well-documented the research should strive to be.

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are important in all stages of a qualitative research project and should guide the actions of the researcher in any given situation. Ethical challenges arise when “we try to decide between one course of action and another, not in terms of expediency or efficiency, but by reference to standards of what is morally right or wrong” (Barnes in Cloke et al. 2000:134:135). Ethical considerations are contextually rooted and ethical dilemmas will only become apparent as the research project is carried out and should therefore be handled in a situated manner (Cloke et al. 2000). Ethics in qualitative research is to be regarded as a process where the issues of confidentiality, informed consent, and consequences of participating in the project are continuously taken into consideration (Thagaard 2003).

The ideal of informed consent

One of the main pillars in an ethically sound research project is the ideal of informed consent. This would include the interviewees' right to know what they are agreeing to (or not) and also informing them about the right to withdraw from the project at any time in the process. Informed consent involves a balance between giving the informants sufficient information about the project and not to reveal too much so that it will result in alteration of the informants behaviour (Thagaard 2003). Even though the ideal of informed consent should always be in the driver's seat there are some factors that can make this difficult to achieve. The researcher does not always know how the research is going to progress and will therefore not be able to account for future developments. At the same time, the researcher will in the course of the research project accumulate information that will, although partially unintended, influence the researcher's positionality according to the interviewee, which in turn will affect what kind of information that is presented to that specific interviewee. In situations where the research takes place in a sensitive political climate, or the researcher is interested in the marginalised position, the issue of unequal power relationships could justify the differentiation of information provided by the researcher (Millstein 2008).

Prior to my fieldwork I developed a written presentation of my project, which I used when I first contacted academics and officials at Stellenbosch Municipality. Still, I started all my interviews with explaining the purpose and objectives of my project. Consent was then given orally. As I recruited most of my informants face to face the need for written communication rarely occurred. I experienced that people were more interested in talking to me about the project rather than being presented with a written presentation. Most of the questions they had concerned which actors I was interviewing and how my research would be applied after it was finished. I made sure that the informants knew how to contact me and how the research would be available to them after my return to Norway.

Ethical considerations also arise after the completion of the fieldwork. During an interview the informant presents his or her experiences through a personal understanding of these experiences. The researcher will then analyse this information from a professional perspective involving double and triple hermeneutics. The researcher's analysis may differ from the informants understanding which could lead

to the informant feeling violated and misunderstood. However, the ideal of informed consent does not include the interpretation of data. None the least, the researcher has a responsibility to present the analysis in a way that respects the principles of anonymity and confidentiality.

Anonymity & confidentiality

Stellenbosch is quite a small area, which means that professional and human relations are rather transparent. Although Town, Cloetesville and Kayamandi each form their own distinct communities, they are geographically situated very close. All the councillors know each other, and the municipal administration and the councillors work closely. Several of my informants highlighted the politicised nature of the local government in Stellenbosch and called for a more clear-cut division between political and administrative processes.

It was hard for me to keep a low profile as I stood out both at the municipal headquarters and in the Coloured and African communities. This made it difficult to keep information about who I was interviewing completely confidential. Confidentiality is a principle that concerns protection of the informant's privacy through making sure that data connected to a person's identity will not be publicised (Kvale 2001). On several occasions I was met with comments that made it clear that the person I was talking to knew about where I had been, and with whom. However, the majority of my informants were interviewed in their official capacity as an employee or an elected representative. I have chosen to anonymise the names and location of all my informants in order to avoid identification of individuals. However, the informant category is maintained in order to understand which voice and position the informant represents. I believe that it is important to highlight the different categories as doing research in a politicised field involves working with issues of power relationships.

Ethical considerations are important in all stages of a research project; from research design to publication. It is vital to continuously reflect on the possible ethical implications of the project. Through accounting for my positionality, working towards

the ideal of informed consent and reflecting on anonymity and confidentiality, I argue that ethical considerations made throughout the process provide a sound basis for my research project.

3. The politics of participatory governance

The theoretical framework for this thesis is concerned with investigating the idea of democratic local governance. The concepts of governance, decentralisation and participation inform the discussion on how to create a participatory interface between the state and civil society. The point of departure for this discussion is the belief that the democratic potential of local governance is determined by power relationships. The outcome of the debate on whether participation is tyrannical or transformational in nature is then dependent on how the politics of governance plays out on a local scale.

The contemporary focus on governance is not a new phenomenon but has become prominent in a globalised context where actors outside the state have increased their role in governance. State re-scaling and partnerships between state and non-state actors (the market and civil society) create new forms of governing and new spaces for engagement. Contemporary decentralisation has been associated with the rolling back of the state, the extension of bureaucratic control, and the marketisation of social services (Heller 2001). This form of decentralisation has been criticised for being apolitical and disempowering.

Although the state's traditional power is decreasing, new forms of governance open up new spaces for public participation and it is here where struggles for substantive citizenship take place (Cornwall & Coelho 2008). Recently, the local scale has begun to attract attention as a focal point of development, with civil society as the main actor (Mohan & Stokke 2008).

The governance debate

The governance of cities has been shaped by three different but interrelated shifts in the global arena: globalisation, decentralisation and democratisation. The nature, and impact, of these shifts is a much debated issue (Devas 2004).

Governance can be defined as “the involvement of a wide range of institutions and actors in the production of policy outcomes via coordination through networks and partnerships” (Painter in Johnston 2000:317). However, there is no consensus on

what this actually entails. One of the main reasons for this is that the governance concept is used as a description for structures (hierarchy, market and networks) as well as to describe the process of administrative practice (governing and decision making).

Pierre & Peters (2000) explain that governance structures have traditionally been understood in four different ways: as hierarchies, as markets, as networks, and as communitarianism. In a hierarchical governance structure the state is the centre of attention. The ideal for a democratically elected government and public bureaucracy is then a vertically integrated state. There is a strong distinction between state and non-state actors, and the state is the manifestation of society's collective interests. The opposite of this view, is to focus on markets as governance structures. This is based on the belief that the market is an effective and just allocation mechanism, as it does not allow politics to interfere in the distribution of resources. This market approach is seen as a mechanism that empowers people through their ability to exercising power, that is choice, as consumers. Networks are composed of a variety of actors ranging from state institutions, organisations and corporations within a policy sector, and are thought to organise a given sector in an efficient and inclusive manner. Meanwhile, governance in the form of communitarianism rejects both the state and the networks as suitable governance mechanisms. Communitarianism proposes a third alternative where autonomous communities run without state interference because the state is either unable or unwilling to provide services.

Pierre & Peters (2000) acknowledge that all of these approaches have been duly criticized. The state is seen as outdated and unable to adapt to new modes of organising society. The market may be more effective and modern than the state but it has no mechanism to solve communal social problems. Also, the market has no economic incentive to fix these problems. Networks may constitute a compromise between these two antagonistic approaches but they also run the risk of becoming too powerful in relation to the state, and thus may tend to ignore state policies and regulations. The communitarian idea of consensus building assumes that communities are homogenous and free of conflict, and this leads to a romanticised and over simplified notion of community life.

Pierre and Peters (2000) claim that a horizontal organisation of society through networks is on the increase through an economic and political globalisation process. However, hierarchies are still the most prevalent governance structure in Western democracies today.

The governance approach is seen as focusing more on processes and outcomes, rather than institutional arrangements. Still, institutional arrangements remain important as they provide a framework for the roles different actors can play in governing. Thinking of governance as a process of interactions among structures, requires a contextual approach to political behaviour. The notion of the state as "steering" society is still important in governance theory. The state may not derive its authority only from legal powers anymore but it is still in control of central resources and the guardian of the collective interest. By focusing almost exclusively on the relationship between different actors, governance theory fails to take into account the objectives of the state. The literature is largely quiet on who defines the objectives of governance (Pierre & Peters 2000), thus one needs to question the power relations within and between the structures (Hyden 2000). Multiple actors from the state, as well as from market and civil society influence each other, and create new boundaries between both the public and private, and the formal and informal arenas of interaction. All contribute to the different structures of governance on varying scales depending on the context in which they operate (Millstein 2008). Hence, the focus of government has shifted from the ability to merely steer society in one way or another, to the politics concerned with governance. This illustrates the need to investigate the roles played by various actors in determining the politics of government and how they influence the making and implementation of policies (Vogt Evensen 2007).

Understanding governance in an African context

Governance as structure in a Western context focuses on networks and an increasingly horizontal organisation, while in an African context the main focus has been on the weak state. None of these approaches are directly applicable to South Africa, which has a relatively strong state and is characterised by hierarchical network

governance (Swilling 1997). Still, these ideas have had a significant influence on South Africa through the close connection the geography discipline has had to the North. This connection takes the form of material resources, academic relationships and theoretical direction. This is to a large extent due to the training of academics abroad during apartheid, especially at British universities. Borrowing foreign theory to apply to a South African reality has proven problematic, both in terms of “dealing with the realities of black South Africans’ lives that had no resonance with Anglo-American writing, and in the subsequent attempt to account for these ‘anomalies’ by highlighting the uniqueness of South African conditions” (Oldfield et al. 2004:291). Although rapid changes are taking place in the post-apartheid reality, patterns of dependency that show the dominance of Northern academics over Southern still persist. South Africa has a long history of academic activism. Scholars had a leading role in many civic movements in the anti-apartheid struggle. When democracy was put in place, many of these academics were absorbed into the state apparatus. Simultaneously, the global development discourse became more and more influential with the most visible influence being the shift from the socialist and Africanist manifesto represented by RDP, to the neo-liberal GEAR strategy. Hence, there is a need to shift the nature of engagement towards the wide spectrum of processes and dynamics that are silenced by mainstream discourses on development and globalisation (Oldfield et al. 2004). Swilling (1997) is one scholar who tries to theorise on the background of African realities and as such end up with challenging the network/hierarchy dichotomy of governance.

Urban (local) governance has, in an African context, been conceptualised as a complex set of constantly changing vertical and horizontal relations. This leads Swilling (1997) to characterise African governance as hierarchical networks; the co-existence of hierarchical and network modes of governance, which are informed by post-colonial political and socio-economic transformations on the continent. On the one hand, you find that independent African states wish to create modern cities in line with Western forms of governance. On the other hand, is the urban majority’s struggle to constitute the modern state and compensate for the massive inadequacy in the capacity of the state to deliver services (Swilling 2002).

The research agenda in the South has tended to focus on a national level rather than the local or city level, and therefore writings on urban governance and politics in the developing world have been rare (Devas 2004). Several scholars point to the lack of analysis of local political structures, processes and cultures, and the impact they have on democratic governance (Barnett & Low, Harriss et al 2004, McCarney & Stren 2003, Millstein 2008, Rakodi 2004). One of the most under-researched issues in local government studies in South Africa is the nature and dynamics of power relations. Pieterse & Van Donk (2008) draw attention to the political-technical interface in municipal management, especially how service delivery dynamics can be constructed as narrow technical interventions, but are in fact, a site of shifting political contestation. Developmental Local Government needs to acknowledge both the institutional and the political dimensions and their mutual shaping of each other. Understanding governance as process then, points to the imperative of understanding the political aspects of the democratic potential of South African local governance.

Governance processes and the localisation of politics

The focus on governance structures and processes implies that the state has experienced a scalar transformation driven by global economic, social, and political trends. The increasing emphasis on the local scale in development discourse is a reflection of these transformations. The state has traditionally been understood as the most powerful actor in governance, but this understanding is now changing. The transformation of state power has been uneven and involves a transfer of power upwards to global institutions like the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), downwards to local institutions through decentralisation, and outwards to actors outside central state spaces. This illustrates the emergence of "glocalisation" (Cox 1997), which involves a simultaneous globalisation and localisation of politics.⁷ This approach allows for an analysis that takes into account both the global political economy and the local agency. While scale previously has been understood as a hierarchy of space ranging from the global down to the local, it

⁷ Building on Harriss et al. "localisation of politics" is understood as "the location of state power and politics to sub-national spatial scales" (Harris et al. 2004:26)

is now acknowledged that geographical scales are socially constructed and undergoing constant development.

Global and regional institutions have not only exercised power on economic and legal grounds but are also influential in shaping the development discourse (Abrahamsen 2000). This discursive framework is rooted in a neo-liberal belief in the market and sees development mainly as a technical exercise. At the same time, the neo-liberal agenda has placed the local in the spotlight through institutional reforms such as decentralisation and good governance (Harriss et al. 2004). The good governance agenda has been associated with neo-liberal objectives of technical interventions but it also includes elements of a post-Marxist understanding of a vibrant local civil society. As such, the good governance agenda places the localisation of politics in a bigger perspective. Governance in a development context has, since the Second World War, been closely connected to aid, which in turn has been attached to political conditionalities from donor countries. Traditionally these conditionalities have involved targeting of specific social groups, such as poor and marginalised groups, the obligation to purchase goods and services from the donor country and structural adjustment programmes concerned with public sector reform and trade liberalisation in the recipient countries. From the end of the 1980s the quality of governance has been in focus with the emergence of *second-generation* conditionalities related to democracy, human rights and good governance. The recognition of the failure of the market in bringing development created a resurfacing of the role of the state. The state was “brought back in” as a necessary condition for development rather than being an obstruction to it (Smith 2007).

Smith (2007) points to how the good governance concept is used differently by different donors. On the one hand it can have an exclusive technical focus related to administrative and legal issues, but on the other hand it can imply:

“government that is democratically organised within a democratic political culture and with efficient administrative organisations, plus the right *policies*, particularly in the economic sphere. These have generally included trade liberalisation, the deregulation of economic activities, the privatisation of state enterprises, and “pro-poor” policies such as reductions in military expenditure in favour of public spending on education and health care” (Smith 2007:4, italics in original).

Good governance then requires policy reform as well as reform of governmental institutions. Aid agencies like the World Bank and UNDP extend the range of institutions involved in governance to include most aspects of social, economic and cultural life. Governance thus refers to all aspects of how a country manages its resources. The good governance agenda has been criticised as having a depoliticising effect (Abrahamsen 2000, Harris et al 2004, Stokke & Mohan 2008). They argue that the form of political agency this neo-liberal agenda constructs is highly circumscribed: what appears to be a revitalised local political agenda does in fact have a depoliticising effect on development and participation.

The good governance agenda with its focus on processes of decentralisation, participation, and capacity building in civil society is an important driving force for the localisation of politics. Interestingly enough, post-Marxist theory has moved in the same direction. Both neo-liberals and post-Marxists advocate an increased focus on local civil society as the main arena for development. However, the role and effect of civil society differs across the theoretical spectrum. According to neo-liberal thought, local civil society will have the opportunity to improve accountability in a democratisation process by holding elected representatives accountable. At the same time it will also empower marginalised groups in society by giving them a stake in development through participation. Post-Marxists, on the other hand, highlight civil society as an arena for opposition against the hegemonic neo-liberal world order through multiple identities. In this view, social movements are actors that have the potential to promote development in spite of limiting structures within state and market (Stokke & Mohan 2008). This convergence between neo-liberal and post-Marxist thought has been made possible because of a shift in development theory from a focus on the developmental state to civil society. They share a vision of a revitalised democracy through participation in local political spaces (Harriss et al. 2004). The introduction of non-state actors in the study of political processes creates a new interest in political actors within and outside the state (Millstein 2008).

In light of this transformation of scale and the good governance agenda, the localisation of politics in the Global South is now constructed and grounded in local political places and practices. The local arena is seen as the main place for participation and mobilisation concerning economic development and local

governance (Harriss et al. 2004). However, Mohan & Stokke (2000) warn of the dangers of romanticising the local, which tend to ignore issues of power. The local scale is not inherently more “good” or democratic than other scales and understanding local politics is vital in order to understand state-society relations.

Decentralisation

Smith (2007:101) argues that “the division of political and administrative powers territorially between different spatial entities in society is as important a constitutional matter as allocation of powers between branches of government and the creation of rules within which they operate.” Decentralisation has been adopted as a part of the democratisation process in all regions of the world and has been especially characteristic of “the third wave” of democratisation (Huntington 1991), although with a varying degree of constitutional status. This trend has been supported by donors, who promote local democratic governance as a part of the good governance agenda.

As with the governance debate, decentralisation is also accounted for in different ways. Hetland (2007) creates a distinction between decentralisation as administrative reform and the normative aspects of decentralisation. The former refers to division of labour within the state apparatus (inter-governmental relations), between the central state and local government (intra-state relations), and between the state and non-state actors (state-society relations). The latter concerns the assumptions on which the decision to decentralise is made. These assumptions have very different origins but they are all based on the assumed positive outcomes of decentralisation, in the form of increased efficiency of the state and the belief that local government will be more responsive to local needs, which in turn will lead to a more equitable society. However, the link between the normative arguments for decentralisation and the actual institutional changes is not necessarily apparent.

Decentralisation as institutional reform involves several different processes such as deconcentration, delegation, devolution and privatisation, which are applied and combined in varying ways in specific contexts. Deconcentration describes the

redistribution of administrative tasks within central government and usually implies a strengthening of lower administrative levels. Delegation refers to the transfer of certain decision-making powers and management responsibility to organisations outside central government structures. These organisations are not directly responsible to central authority and can include corporations and non-governmental organisations. Privatisation involves a full transfer of functions from state to private actors. Devolution is the only decentralisation strategy that transfers the responsibility of executive organs to elected political actors and institutions on a lower administrative level, which is independent of and distinct from central government. Regional and local government are thus only subjected to supervisory control from the centre. However, decentralisation in developing countries is often less rigorous. In this context devolution means that some functions are given to local governments but the central state still establish some control mechanisms and continue to play an important financial role (Enemou 2000, Hetland 2007).

Although “everyone” promotes decentralisation, there are important differences in the perceived function of this decentralisation. The distinction between administrative and political decentralisation corresponds with a fundamental divergence of thought between the political right (neo-liberalism) and the political left (post-Marxism). The neo-liberal school focuses on the relationship between administrative reform and state performance. The success or failure of decentralisation is measured in implementation indicators and can therefore be characterised as a technocratic approach to decentralisation. While politics in the neo-liberal camp is considered secondary, the post-Marxist school stresses the need for increased mobilisation of civil society. They advocate a bigger role for civil society vis-à-vis the state through transfer of decision-making powers to marginalised groups. “Thus, administrative decentralisation without empowerment may be seen as no more than a façade to maintain or strengthen the power of central government.” (Hetland 2007:54). The establishment of democratic institutions does not necessarily imply democratic politics as the administrative decentralisation school does not look at structures and processes that shape these institutions in the first place (Luckham et al. 2003).

The depoliticising effects of decentralisation on development and participation, as described by Stokke & Mohan (2008), have several implications. Firstly, decentralisation factionalises and fragments political opposition. Secondly, decentralisation has been used for penetrating and manipulating local political society. By building on local energies the central state can govern more effectively as they are absolved of responsibility for welfare provision while at the same time seem responsive to local needs. Thirdly, it is important to distinguish between the technocratic and the patronage outcomes of decentralisation. A technocratic position involves the central state treating decentralisation as a tool to “tweak” institutions while participation from below only exists in theory. Patronage may lead to the risk of the elite capturing resources that may be channelled through local government. Fourthly, limited resources and political capacity in local civil society, especially poor and marginalised groups, leave little time and energy for contesting political struggles. Finally, local government is affected by infrastructural and institutional capacity.

Decentralisation is in many instances an outcome of new governance structures but is also a strategy for the realisation of democratic and participatory governance. The depoliticisation critique questions the implications of decentralised institutional reform on local democratic structures and processes. Reactions to this critique will depend on how democracy in itself is understood.

Deepening democracy: participation in local governance

The concepts and constructions of democracy are under renewed contestation. It is possible to identify two competing narratives of democracy: one that celebrates its ascendancy and another which is concerned about its deficits. The democratisation debate goes way back in history but in a developmental context, the third wave of democratisation brought increased attention to decentralisation and citizen participation processes in the South. Now, a decade later, a second generation of questions are surfacing concerning what happens when citizens actually *do* engage, and how new forms of citizens engagement interface with more traditional understandings of representative democracy (Gaventa 2006).

The triumphalist stand points to the spread and quantity of democracy to exemplify its success. However, the deficit school argues, democracy is not simply about quantity and institutional design but rather if these structures give meaning to people in their own context (Grugel 2002). Democratisation is then about deepening the quality and inclusiveness of democracy. Despite the spread of democratic institutions there are signs that point to a growing crisis of the quality and legitimacy of these institutions. This is especially apparent in a South context where democracy struggles to deliver in circumstances of poverty, and social and political inequality (Gaventa 2006).

Abrahamsen (2000) argue that African democratic states are trapped between the demands by external donors for economic liberalisation, and the needs of the political majority. The result has been the dominance of the good governance agenda that has "presided over the creation of what might be called *exclusionary democracies*, which allow for political competition, but cannot incorporate or respond to the demands of the majority in any meaningful way, " (Abrahamsen 2000: xiv, italics in the original).

As a response to the perceived crisis of democracy, a number of competing approaches have surfaced. The neo-liberal market approach advocates a continued weakening of the state with decentralisation and privatisation as the main tools to achieve democratic goals. The liberal representative approach highlights the importance of creating democratic institutions and procedures through multi-party elections. A third approach has emerged from a participatory democracy tradition and is referred to as "the deepening democracy" approach.

"In this view, democracy is not only a set of rules, procedures and institutional design, and cannot be reduced to only a way of competition among parties, though these are of course important. Rather it is a process through which citizens exercise ever deepening control over decisions which affect their lives, and as such is also constantly under construction" (Gaventa 2006:11).

In some accounts, this deepening of democracy also involves the extension of social rights, which may be attained through participatory processes and struggles. Latin American scholars and experiences have been especially influential in this regard, with the example of deliberative budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in the forefront.

Southern critics of the liberal representative model claim that the liberal approach is limited in its understanding of how citizens engage in political life. In addition, it is not relevant in understanding historical trajectories of democratisation in the South. Avritzer (2002) argues that theories on democratisation are based on Western experiences expressed through democratic elitism. This view emerged out of the post-World Wars and was concerned with protecting democracy from too much participation by the ill-equipped masses. Democracy was then reduced to the act of choosing, through elections, between different elites, thereby eliminating horizontal accountability. Democratic elitism has been challenged in a Western setting but has been hegemonic in explaining and expanding democracy in the South. However, in post-authoritarian democracies the challenge is to include people in a political life from which they were previously excluded. In this context, "protecting" democracy from the masses will only serve to undermine newly established democratic institution and practices. Avritzer proposes a theory of participatory publics "because the gap between the political space and political representation is wider still in post-authoritarian countries...the most sensible way to further democratise state-society relations is to transfer democratic potential that emerge at the society level to the political arena through participatory designs (Avritzer 2002:8-9).

Democracy building has largely focused on strengthening civil society and state reform as separate processes. Gaventa (2006) argues for a reconsideration of this approach. As civil society and the state are increasingly linked through practices of co-governance, the challenges is to create a better understanding of the intersection of these two spheres and systematically work on both sides of the equation. Democracy building is an ongoing process of struggle and contestation rather than the adoption of a standardised form of institutional design. Most importantly then, participatory processes must engage in issues of political power relationships.

Spaces of participation

Participation has, over the last thirty years, become one of the main pillars of development theory and practice, assumed to result in empowerment and transformation. Though it initially was marginal within the development agenda, it is now widely adopted and acknowledged that at least some form of beneficiary

participation is necessary for sustainable development. However, the last decade has produced a heavy critique of participatory approaches, claiming that it has not been successful in achieving meaningful social change because of failing to address issues of power and inequality (Hickey & Mohan 2005). At the beginning of the 21st century participation had a leading role in almost all development projects with support ranging from the World Bank to alternative development proponents. The concept of participation itself was a reaction to a top-down, donor-driven development agenda advocated by major Western development institutions in the late 1980s and onwards but has now become the main buzz word of the very same institutions. Consequently, a critique of participation has surfaced. However, the implications this critique has for the future of participation differs.

According to Cooke & Kothari (2001) the participation agenda contains tyrannical elements. They argue that the tyrannical potential is systemic in character. Because the critique of participation mainly concerns methodological questions of how to improve participation practice, development practitioners fail to see how the discourse of participation in itself can promote unjustified exercises of power. They ask whether the constant revision of methodology has contributed to hide the problems within the discourse and served to legitimize the participatory project rather than challenging it.

Cleaver (2001) argues that the participation paradigm in development has become an act of faith. She claims that there is no evidence of substantial effects of participation in terms of material gains for vulnerable groups, nor has it been a strategy for social change. The idea that participation is intrinsically "good" and can be institutionally designed leaves no room for questions of power and politics. Meanwhile, Cleaver has no intention of dismissing a people-centred approach but rather points out the importance of acknowledging that while they are promising they are also "inevitably messy and difficult, approximate and unpredictable in outcome" (Cleaver 2001:37). More radical approaches to empowerment are associated with both individual and class action through the transformation of subordinating structures in law, property rights and institutions of society. Such ideas are somewhat out of fashion within the contemporary development discourse, although feminist and Latin American participation scholars continue the debate. According to Cleaver (2001:37),

by mainstreaming “empowerment” in development the element of transformation is lost: “The concept of action is individualized, empowerment depoliticized.”

One of the more radical approaches to participatory democracy is inspired, among others, by the Latin American experiment of participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre. Fung & Wrigth’s (2003) concept of “Empowered Participatory Governance” (EPG) has as its point of departure, the assertion that the institutions of liberal democracy- representative democracy and techno-bureaucratic administration- are limited in their ability to address the challenges of just and equitable development. They present three principles that are fundamental to EPG: a focus on specific, tangible problems, involvement of ordinary people who are affected by these problems, and a deliberative solution to these problems. EPG is based on case studies from the United States, India and Brazil, and advocates the need for decision-making to be devolved to public deliberations at the local level. The goal of these deliberations is to reach a consensus that can be linked to the central political establishment, which has the power to realise the collective decision that are made. Participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil, has been widely used in illustrating EPG. Hickey and Mohan (2005) claim that the technical approach to decentralisation and participation obscures the analysis of what makes participation difficult for marginalised groups in the first place. They also criticised the EPG approach for being too narrowly focused on institutional design. Mansfield (2003) questions the idea of consensus building: is it possible, and is it even desirable? Deliberative spaces need to incorporate conflict in order to avoid one group or individual exercising force over another. Conflict is also productive in creating a discussion that will lead to a more realistic decision being made at the end of the day.

Miraftab (2004) has a different approach to how participatory spaces are constituted. Writing in a feminist tradition she points to how neo-liberal understandings of citizenship fail to acknowledge people’s multiple expressions of participatory praxis. Miraftab (2004) makes a distinction between “invited spaces of citizenship” (Cornwall 2002) and “invented space of citizenship”. Invited spaces are defined as the spaces which are legitimized by donors and government agencies and occupied by grassroots and their allied NGOs. In South Africa this invited space is

mainly channelled through local government and its councillors. Excluded South Africans take advantages of these formal channels whenever possible but in many cases these state provided spaces are ineffective in addressing their needs. When formal channels fail, people invent alternative spaces of engagement. Invented spaces are also occupied by the grassroots but are in direct confrontation with the authorities and the status quo. This opposition in South Africa incorporate a variety of strategies ranging from informal negotiations, capacity building and training; to mass mobilisation for peaceful protests such as sit-ins or land invasions; to insurgent collective action such as illegal reconnections of water and electricity and repossession of houses. The invited spaces focus on creating coping mechanism for the poor, while invented spaces are more concerned with challenging and resisting dominant power relations. As such, the constitution of these participatory spaces reflect the ideological battle between a neo-liberal and a post-structuralist understanding of civil society, where invited spaces represent the former and invented spaces represent the latter.

Miraftab (2004) warns of the risk of, and the tendency to, frame actors in invited spaces as the only legitimate representatives of civil society, and thereby portraying invented spaces as taken up by "outcast civil society" or extremists. In accordance with feminist theory, alternative citizenship approaches argue for an inclusive definition of the informal arena of politics, rather than sustaining the dichotomy between the formal and informal, and the public and the private. Hence, the significance of expanding the arenas of practicing citizenship to include both invited and invented forms of participation. Miraftab & Wills (2005) also include *insurgent* space as a fair and legitimate practice of shaping citizenship from below. They highlight the flexible and innovative strategies employed by South African civil society, and show how citizens move between different types of spaces depending on the situation. This movement elucidates how active citizenship is not a given, but a situated practice.

Reforms in governance have opened up new spaces for citizen engagement. These spaces are in some instances a result of a remodelling of colonial structures to fit contemporary ideas of governance, or the creation of entirely new structures based on

these governance reforms. Cornwall & Coelho (2008) call these hybrid spaces "new democratic spaces", which are characterised by being intermediate, situated spaces in the interface between state and society. They are also intermediary in that they are spaces of negotiation, information and exchange. These spaces are sometimes provided for by the state in which society is invited in, while at other times they develop out of civil society's demand for inclusion. The form of these spaces also varies, from one-off consultative events to regularised institutions. Cornwall & Coelho argue that these are distinct spaces, which they term the "participatory sphere". The participatory sphere can be contrasted to other approaches, which situate participatory institutions either within the public sphere or within the state such as Avritzer's (2002) and Fung & Wright's (2003) accounts of Brazil respectively. However, it is difficult to see how the participatory sphere stands out as a distinct arena for participation that is fundamentally different from other participatory spaces. The state relates to society in multiple and fluid ways, and civil society moves between engagement and opposition to the state (Oldfield 2008). Avritzer or Fung & Wright cannot be confined to either the public sphere or the state sphere alone. The interface between the state and society is therefore nothing new. In this regard, Mirafitab's concepts of invited and invented spaces of citizenship provide a clearer analytical tool.

Power relations and citizenship participation

Following the critique of localism in decentralisation, Kothari (2001) argues that local knowledge is not essentially pure in nature as assumed in participatory approaches to planning and development. The analysis of power can therefore not be confined to the macro-level. Power circulates and can be expressed in many ways but this is lost in the creation of dichotomies within participation. By creating a binary between the haves and have-nots, power is not understood in terms of social or political discourse but rather as a material condition:

"Thus participatory approaches can unearth who gets what, when and where, but not necessarily the processes by which this happens or the ways in which the knowledge produced through participatory techniques is a normalized one that reflects and articulates wider power relations in society" (Kothari 2001:141).

Participatory approaches seek to challenge power relations in society by recognising the control certain groups have over others, which results in weaker groups having limited access to decision-making. However, simply identifying and including these groups in planning does not in itself lead to empowerment. Inclusion can also serve as an act of control. The neo-liberal agenda seeks to stabilise state-citizen relations by implicating citizens in governance and thereby uses inclusion as a tool for dominance (Miraftab 2009). Cohen (in Kothari 2001) calls this “insidious modes of inclusionary control” where programmes designed to include the disempowered often reduce the space for negotiation. Invited spaces are relatively benign and liberal with little room for conflict, and make it even more difficult to challenge the prevailing hierarchy. This leads to inclusionary control and bring about conformity.

In a situation of unequal resource distribution among the participants there is a real danger of elite capture. Similarly, path dependency in policy choices can limit participation to mere input on implementation (Cornwall & Coelho 2008). Participatory approaches are often undertaken to justify an already predefined agenda rather than shaping objectives and priorities. Practitioners use tools that shape the performance of the participant, which in turn requires that the participant be in possession of the rights skills to participate. Still, there is always room for subversion of the participatory space, especially through refusing to perform. The active choice on non-participation or non-performance will often be framed as uncooperative or even socially deviant. In this way, participation can contribute to the reassertion of power by dominant groups through the classification and representation of information but at the same time create space for participants to perform a certain reality in order to achieve specific goals (Kothari 2001).

As a response to the tyranny critique, Hickey & Mohan (2004) argue that the participatory development project has not failed. Rather, people in development countries constantly find new and innovative ways of expressing and deepening their agency in participation. They agree with Cooke & Kothari (2001) that participatory approaches have fallen short of addressing issues of power and inequality but that the bottom-up, people-centred development agenda is here to stay. The main issue, they claim, is whether these new strategies can move beyond the critique and constitute a

transformative alternative to mainstream strategies focused on technical development interventions.

The main problem with both mainstream participation and the tyranny critique is, according to Hickey & Mohan (2005), the failure to locate participation within a broader theoretical framework on development and citizenship. They support the political left in its criticism of the obsession with the local as opposed to wider structures of injustice (Stokke & Mohan 2008), the insufficient understanding of how power operates on a micro-level (Kothari 2001), the inadequate understanding of structure and agency (Cleaver 2001) and the tendency to focus on technical institutional reform. However, they believe that it is possible to create a participation discourse that is transforming, by locating it within a radical notion of citizenship. This radical notion of citizenship has its roots in a critical modernist approach to development. Critical modernism evolved out of a criticism of post-modernism and its inability to adequately address issues of structure and agency in society. It proposes to rethink development rather than reject it as a whole. It is rooted in Marxism, feminism and post-structuralist ideas, and believes in the main pillars of modernism- democracy, emancipation, development and progress. Critical modernism challenges the hegemonic position of capitalism in its modern social form and its epistemology is located within a socialist political economy. It seeks to avoid romanticising both local knowledge and the poor, by asserting that modernity is not a singular entity. Rather, ideas and practices of modernity are situated in local practices and involve multiple modernities. Thus, critical modernism rests on a basis of radical democracy where people have direct control over all resources and institutions used and inhabited by them (Hickey & Mohan 2004).

Hickey & Mohan (2004) reconceptualise participation as citizenship and propose “citizenship participation” (Gaventa 2002) as a means to understand the convergence of people’s agency and their participation in specific interventions. Citizenship can be defined as “the set of practices (juridical, political, economic or cultural) which define a person as a competent member of society, and which as a consequence shape the flow of resources to persons and social groups” (Turner in Hickey & Mohan 2004:66). By relocating participation this way, it is placed in a broader socio-political context where people extend their status and rights as members

of particular political communities. Just inviting citizens to participate will not extend the democratic engagement. Equal participation requires popular education and mobilisation. In order to be able to exercise political agency, people need to consider themselves as citizens rather than beneficiaries of development. They also need the skills and confidence to contribute to this development. At the same time, the participatory sphere is also an arena for creating citizenship, as it is capacity building in itself (Cornwall & Coelho 2008).

Following Hickey & Mohan's (2004) definition of citizenship, Miraftab & Wills (2005) critique the liberal understanding of citizenship as a linear progression of rights. They claim that the experiences of the poor black majority in post-apartheid South Africa in failing to access their newly attained basic social rights illustrate the internal contradictions in liberal citizenship thinking: constitutionally enshrined rights are buried under the devastating social and economic impacts of neo-liberalism (Friedmann in Miraftab & Wills 2005). Alternative notions of citizenship take people as the point of departure, not the state, and this has led to numerous reconceptualisations, like citizenship participation (Gaventa 2002), inclusive citizenship (Gaventa 2006) and insurgent citizenship (Holston in Miraftab & Wills 2005). These new conceptualisations advocate practices of citizenship that go beyond taking up invitations to participate in invited spaces of citizenship, preferring a space where people create their own opportunities and terms of engagement.

Concluding remarks

The participation debate takes place within a wider debate on local democratic governance which is shaped by processes of globalisation, decentralisation and democratisation.

The introduction of governance has changed the role of the state in governing, although there is currently no consensus on the definition of governance, as it is used as a concept to explain both governing structures and processes of administrative practice. The transformation of state power involves a transfer of power to both global and local institutions, as well as to actors outside the state, such as business and civil society. This illustrates a simultaneous globalisation and localisation of politics.

Global institutions shape the development discourse and advocate a neo-liberal approach, most clearly articulated in the good governance agenda, which understands development as a technical intervention. Decentralisation as administrative reform, where getting the institutions right and bringing the government closer to the people are the main objectives, is a reflection of this agenda. Local civil society is further understood as having a positive effect on accountability, in addition to becoming empowered through being given a stake in development. This understanding of decentralisation and local civil society is critiqued by post-structuralists who point out the local is not intrinsically more “good” than other scales, and that civil society first and foremost serves as an arena for opposition against the hegemonic neo-liberal order.

It is important to distinguish between different kinds of participatory spaces that are created in the interface between state and citizens. Although the formalisation of participatory mechanisms is essential, just creating structures for participation is not enough to create viable institutions. This invited space carries significant consequences: it reduces the avenues of participation in ward committees and engagement with the state. Simultaneously, unequal power relationships create unequal possibilities for participation and participation will not have any substantial effects before these inequalities are addressed.

I have argued that power relationships determine the democratic potential of local participatory spaces. The main challenge for Stellenbosch Municipality is then to create a balance between formal institutions and continuous political participation. The question still remains if it is possible to create these dynamic and democratic local spaces. The discursive power is mostly exercised from above, which makes it difficult for marginalised groups to participate. In addition, lack of capacity in both local state institutions and civil society creates obstacles to achieving inclusive and transformational governance processes.

4. South Africa's insitutional space for public participation

The institutional space for local participation can be claimed to be vast in contemporary South Africa. The Constitution is one of the most progressive in the world and even includes socio-economic rights. The White paper on Local Government of 1998 entrenched the ambitious visions set out for local government in the constitution. Apartheid policies had fundamentally distorted the spatial, social and economic environments in which people lived and there was a need to

...reduce historical socio-economic backlogs through acceleration of service delivery to local communities... it has become vital that a strong synergetic partnership between central and local government, civil society organisations and private and donor communities be galvanised to rectify associated inefficiencies” (Mogale 2003:216)

This implies that local government has gone from a highly unequal and racially classified local administration to a potentially integrated, developmental, equitable, and sustainable form of local governance.

This chapter looks at the historical role of local government and the subsequent transformation of local institutions. It explores the desired outcome of public participation and efficiency of the Developmental Local Government and how this is channelled through Integrated Development Planning. As such, it seeks to answer research question number one of what characterise the institutional spaces for South African citizens and how is it constructed? Special attention is given to the ward committee, which is the lowest administrative level in South Africa. The ward committees also serve a pivotal role in organising community participation in the integrated development planning process in Stellenbosch Municipality.

Challenges for Developmental Local Government

“Developmental Local Government is the dynamic way in which local councils work together with local communities to find sustainable ways to meet their needs and improve their lives” (White Paper on Local Government 1998)

Following the first democratic election in 1994 national government sought to redress the deeply entrenched imbalances inherited from Apartheid. Government decided to strengthen grassroots participation as a strategy for planning for development in a highly unequal society, and did this by placing considerable emphasis on what it termed *Developmental Local Government* (Binns & Nel 2002). DLG became the custodian of the necessary public interventions needed to bring about social and economic development. The Constitution insisted development must be ecologically sustainable and that local participatory mechanisms were to be put in place. These mechanisms would allow citizens to hold government accountable between elections through annualised moments of engagements that would link town plans to the budget (Pieterse et al 2008). The goals of local government are as such:

- a) to provide democratic and accountable government for local communities;
- b) to ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner;
- c) to promote social and economic development;
- d) to promote a safe and healthy environment; and
- e) To encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in the matters of local government

(Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996).

The magnitude of this task started to sink in after the 2000 local government elections when it became clear that many of the municipalities were not even close to be able to carry out the ambitions of DLG. Instead of abandoning the DLG political project, the problem has largely been defined as one of lack of institutional capacity (Pieterse et al. 2008). The continued commitment to local government empowerment then needs to be clarified as the literature tends to focus on over-centralisation, especially in an African context where decentralisation often has been used as an excuse to increase centralisation (Swilling 1997). Former President, Thabo Mbeki, highlighted the pivotal role of local government in his State of the Nation address in 2006 by stating that the government would pay special attention to the critical task of strengthening local government. Municipalities are still the main sphere responsible for most basic services. The additional elements of creating sustainable human settlements, local

economic development, and sustainable development show that the commitment by central government to local government is even stronger than when the Constitution was adopted (Pieterse et al. 2008).

Challenges of efficiency and participation

There are two desired outcomes of the South African developmental local government: efficiency and participation. The argument for efficiency focuses on the comparative advantages of scale, information and accountability assumed to occur by bringing government closer to the people. Hence, development is measured in 'hard' indicators where success takes the form of better services, more housing, more local economic growth and more effective forms of integrated planning. The participation strand, on the other hand, argues that decentralisation and participation create more opportunities for ordinary citizens to engage the state and be influential in local decision-making and implementation. Therefore, DLG hold the potential to promote a deepening of democracy (Heller 2008).

Officially, all parties support both strands of argument. However, in practice both sides of the DLG debate tend to have a zero-sum view of the double desiderata. The efficiency school, or technocrats, fear that too much participation will overwhelm institutions that are often new and poorly developed, while the participation school, or associationalist, highlight the tendency of institution building to crowd out civil society. Heller (2008) claims that both the technocrats and the associationalists fail to provide a comprehensive understanding of the local developmental state. The former fails to acknowledge that institutions in young democracies are circumscribed by huge inequalities in resources and capacity. Similarly, the latter fail to see how these inequalities affect different social groups' capacity to work the institutions, as they assume that communities or disadvantaged groups have some innate associational capacity.

This leaves two important problems unresolved: the first one is that associational life is in many ways a result of institutional design, and participation therefore requires the building of new kinds of institutions. The second is what Heller (2008) calls the transmission problem: the issue of how participatory input is

translated into actual output. Both problems illustrate the need for increased attention to institutional design, as well as to the politics taking place within these institutions. The division between efficiency and participation has become the main fault line in South Africa, and is generally presented as a conflict between service delivery and participation, top-down versus bottom-up planning, the ANC as party-state versus social movements, the neo-liberal GEAR strategy versus the civil society RDP. These issues have become the locus of political contestation and present a rigid picture of the situation, which overshadows institutional and political complexity. When state and society are perceived to be irreconcilable dimensions, it leaves little room for positive-sum scenarios and strategies to achieve both the efficiency and participatory aspect of DLG (Heller 2008).

The historical role of local government

Apartheid has left both physical and psychological imprints on human settlements and local government. In order to understand transformation and democratisation we need to understand the historical role of local government in the creation and continuation of inequality and separation.

Racial segregation was not only about physical separation but also about administrative division. The Black Local Authorities (BLAs) had no revenue base, in addition to no legitimacy, and therefore no resources with which to develop their communities. Neither did they receive any cross-subsidy from affluent white residential areas. These injustices caused the mobilisation of opposition to the apartheid system at the local government level. Community organised rate and rent boycotts made the segregated municipal regime ungovernable, thereby forcing a transition of power: "In turn, it was the creation of non-racial municipal structures (with one tax base for the whole city) that was a precursor for building non-racial democratic local government in post-apartheid South Africa " (Beall et al. 2002:71).

The ending of apartheid offered an opportunity to reconstruct South African cities that were first fractured by decades of racial Fordism and later by the polarising effect of post-Fordist development (Beall et al. 2002). This reconstruction demanded massive economic, political and spatial interventions: the responsibility of effecting

spatial integration of cities was given to local government. Democratic local government did not instantly emerge with the abolition of apartheid but had to be created. The debate on how the construction form, function and content would take place is crucial in this respect. The popular struggle against apartheid developed in the townships and as a consequence local democracy in South Africa has strong roots. The transition to democracy was a drawn out procedure which resulted in extensive local negotiations that brought together municipalities, unions, civics, and businesses (Heller 2001). The historical role of local government in Stellenbosch and the ongoing construction of an integrated and democratic municipality through the ward committee system will be discussed throughout the analysis.

Decentralisation and capacity in municipalities

The South African Constitution (1996) and the White Paper on Local Government (1998) describe the relationship between national, provincial and local governments as one of equal, distinctive, and interdependent "spheres". The transition to democracy was characterised by a rhetoric that highlighted inclusivity and non-hierarchy and seeking outcomes that emerged out of processes rather than being pushed down from the top. However, this discourse has changed to one of a "tiers" approach where local government is seen as an extension of an agenda produced at the national level, and where local government is reduced to the "delivery arm" of national government. (Schmidt 2008). Subsequently, the inability of local government to come to grips with the enormous service backlog is attributed to the lack of capacity in local government. The introduction of Project Consolidate by the Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG), which aims at building capacity in municipalities, can be seen as an effort to address these shortcomings. Hence, "framing the problem of delivery as a problem of "municipal capacity" again reinforces a "tiers" mindset- local government as the "child" requiring support and discipline from the superior tiers. This framing inevitably results in a series of interventions from the national and provincial levels to tighten control over local government" (Schmidt 2008:114).

The spheres approach is associated with a networked governance system where partnership not only with private actors, but also civil society, is the most

prominent component. The shift to a tiers approach points towards a more bureaucratic paradigm. However, these two approaches operate side by side and sometimes in competition. The tensions between the objectives of public participation and effective local government are evident in the construction of the developmental local government system.

While the decentralisation debate has increased its importance in the global discourse over the last twenty years, the debate has been muted in South Africa. This is hardly surprising given the centralising tendencies of the ANC as a reaction to the apartheid legacy where political mobilisation was based on ethnical and regional identity and local power blocs sought to undermine the ANC. The end of apartheid totally redefined the role of local government through making it the centre for both consolidation of democracy and poverty alleviation. Beall et al. (2002) use the term *decentralisation by stealth* to describe the two somewhat ambiguous developments in South African governance: the increasing democratisation and devolution of government responsibilities, and the simultaneous centralising of state powers. Decentralisation was introduced through a technocratic intervention to get the new municipal structures up and running. The result was that this reform process took place in a somewhat random process without a substantial political debate. The question is then how this depoliticised process has shaped the institutional space for local democratic participation.

The local state wish to create a modern city while at the same struggling with inadequacy in the capacity to deliver service. Theron (2005) points to how South African municipalities face historical challenges. The local state has inherited skewed settlement patterns, which are inefficient and costly. This also involves the concentration of taxable economic resources in so-called white areas, which demands redistribution in order to address backlogs in service delivery in underdeveloped areas. Spatial separation and disparities between town and townships increase the cost of service provision and transport, and entrenched modes of decision-making contribute to sustain this disparity. Meanwhile, citizens struggle to constitute an accountable and responsive local state. New local governance structures may open up new political spaces that can establish a culture of participation between

municipalities and the communities they serve and thereby deepening the meaning of democracy. However, how democratic the outcome of this participation is depends on the power relations at play in the specific political space. This leads me to look into the Stellenbosch context.

Constructing developmental local government in Stellenbosch

These challenges accounted for above are also evident in Stellenbosch. Before analysing institutional reforms a short introduction is necessary. Stellenbosch Municipality comprises of 19 wards and is made up of, *inter alia*, Klapmuts, Koelenhof, Kylemore, Johannesdal, Pniel, Franschhoek, Stellenbosch, Jamestown, Raithby and the rural areas (see map on page 9). Stellenbosch Municipality's regional gross domestic product (RGDP) reached R3.9 billion in 2004 with an annual growth rate of 4% between 2000 and 2004, which makes Stellenbosch the second largest contributor (27%) to the Cape Winelands District economy. The majority language in the area is Afrikaans with approximately 70% of residents stating this as their first language, followed by the minorities IsiXhosa (29.8%) and English (8.3%). In 2001 the coloureds made up 57% of the population. On average, the population growth in the area is the same as in other municipalities; meanwhile the faster growth of the African population is starting to change the demographic composition. The white population is slightly larger but it was estimated that the African population would exceed the white population by 2006. The numbers also show an increase in income inequality. In 1996 the mean monthly income of the African and Coloured population groups was 44% and 54% respectively of the total mean for all groups. In 2001 the figures had declined to 29% and 46%.⁸

The case study in this thesis is limited to Stellenbosch Town and the surrounding communities of Cloetesville and Kayamandi, thus including 11 wards. Even though not all wards are included in the analysis, when addressed together, the three areas will be referred to as Stellenbosch.

⁸ All numbers are taken from the Stellenbosch Municipality IDP 2008

Stellenbosch wards included in analysis

Area	Wards	Political affiliation March 2008	Socio-economic profile
Town	6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 16	DA	Historically white area, traditional city centre of Stellenbosch, mixed residential and business. Mostly middle and upper class.
Cloetesville	10, 11	DA	Historically coloured area, mostly residential some business, urban and rural area, mostly lower and middle class with some wealthy wine estates
Kayamandi	13, 14, 15	ANC	Historically black area, mostly residential (app. 50% informal housing), mostly lower class

Source: Stellenbosch IDP 2008, categorisation based on Piper & Deacon 2008:72

Stellenbosch Municipality is an area that is dealing with the legacy of discrimination and exclusion. Great wealth, in the form of large wine estates and the upper class town residential area, exists side by side with impoverished farm workers and poor households in the urban townships. The three areas included in the case are chosen because of this discrepancy. They are geographically situated very close but are vastly different in terms of their demographic, economic, and infrastructural profile. The main business district is located in the town wards and is surrounded by mainly white neighbourhoods that consist of single-resident properties (app. 800 m²). The town wards have a relatively low population density and high levels of service delivery. All the ward councillors from the town wards represent the DA.

The two wards in Cloetesville have a population that consist of 80% Coloureds, with Muslim (who are also mostly coloured) and other ethnic groups making up the remaining 20%. The area shows high levels of poverty and

unemployment.⁹ The high rates of population growth also indicate an “unacceptable over-population” (Ward Plan 10 & 11, 2008). In terms of housing, Cloetesville consists mostly of low and middle cost housing, although with some high cost housing as well as informal settlements. Both ward councillors in Cloetesville are from the DA.

Kayamandi is made up of three wards with almost exclusively black African residents. Approximately 50% live in informal dwellings and the proportional change since 1991 suggest that the housing backlog is growing. This is due to a large increase in in-migration to the area after the abolition of influx control in the late 1980s. The area also struggles with high levels of unemployment (30%), poverty, and crime (Stellenbosch Municipality IDP 2008). All three wards are run by ANC councillors.

The different characteristics of Town, Cloetesville and Kayamandi wards are reflected in their identified needs and have consequences for how these needs are addressed by the wards. While the affluent town wards mostly worry about traffic calming, nature conservation and densification of residential areas, the more disadvantaged Coloured and African wards are more concerned with housing, employment and law enforcement. As we will see later, the capacities of the ward committees in making their needs heard differ greatly across the various communities.

Governance processes in Stellenbosch take place in a set of complex and constantly changing vertical and horizontal relations (Swilling 1997). Local government operates in both hierarchical and network modes of governance as it is involved in inter-governmental and intra-governmental planning processes, such as the IDP, and in partnerships with local stakeholders from the business sector and civil society, which pose both opportunities and challenges for the municipality to deliver on its mandate.

The expectation of Stellenbosch municipality to simultaneously address poverty reduction, spatial integration of diverse social and class groups, and deepen citizenship is deemed by many to be unrealistic, especially since local government is

⁹ Employment among the Coloured population in Stellenbosch Municipality was 37.6% on 2006, Stellenbosch Municipality IDP 2008:17.

affected by shortcomings in infrastructural and institutional capacity (Mohan & Stokke 2008). The demarcation process was not completed until 2000 and the amalgamation of several small municipalities into one large administration in Stellenbosch has demanded a great deal of adjustment. The municipal administration has had to incorporate the needs of the previously disadvantaged wards while at the same time raise revenues, as local government derives over 90% of its revenue from locally raised taxes (Woolridge 2002). The scale of the budget for the municipality has therefore not increased significantly although the population to be served is substantially larger. The capacity of local government to address poverty is severely limited and the municipal administration is mostly confined to implementation of higher level policies. This lack of administrative authority is also evident in the difficulties in working the complex inter-governmental spending framework as the local administration is dependent on getting other tiers to accept their priorities. The only benefit that comes from this restricted administrative autonomy is that expensive line items, like housing and education, are derived from provincial and national budgets (Beall et al. 2002).

The issue of spatial integration of diverse social and class groups is vital in the context of the Western Cape region as the demographic composition in this area is different from the rest of the country. The majority of coloured citizens in this area creates an explicit politics of race that has great impact on the dynamics of the municipality.

The legacy of race in Western Cape and Stellenbosch

Western Cape is probably the region in South Africa where the issue of racial integration is most problematic given the area's history of racial segregation and labour preferential policies during apartheid. The Western Cape is the only province where black Africans are a minority and the coloured population the majority, which makes racial issues more prominent in politics in this province. "Coloured" was a racial category under apartheid which defined the people of mixed descent concentrated in the Cape province and was placed between the whites and the blacks in the racial hierarchy. The Coloured Labour Preferential Act of 1954 gave the coloureds relative privileges to the blacks when it came to job opportunities and

services. Africans were confined to homelands, or Bantustans, and were only allowed in the cities as migrant workers. However, black townships, as well as coloured townships, emerged outside city centres and settled down in spite of influx control mechanisms. While the apartheid government tolerated the coloured townships, the strategy towards the black townships were one of expulsion (Millstein 2008). The result is that the coloured and black populations have different experiences with the apartheid struggle, even though local opposition to the system was prominent in both types of townships. These differing experiences are still highly relevant and inform the politics of contemporary South Africa. The black townships are characterised by a higher level of politicisation and an overwhelming majority of black Africans has remained loyal to the liberation movement and the ANC. On the other hand, the coloureds have somewhat surprisingly generally voted for their previous oppressors and a large majority still votes for non-ANC parties. Hence, the Western Cape is the only province where the ANC meets any real political opposition (Adikhari 2005). The latest example of this trend is the new won majority for the DA in Western Cape in the general elections in April 2009, with 51.5% of the votes, and they can now hold the Premier seat without entering a coalition for the first time (Mail & Guardian 29.04.08).

The population of Stellenbosch reflects the dynamics in the province with a majority of coloureds within municipal boundaries.¹⁰ Consequently, Stellenbosch Municipality had been characterised by political instability with shifting coalitions and leadership. Only since 2002 the political control of council has shifted three times, and is at the moment controlled by an ANC-coalition. Support for the different political parties has a clear racial and spatial distribution with DA controlling the white town wards and the coloured township of Cloetesville, while the black township in Kayamandi almost exclusively votes for the ANC. However, the general elections gave an indicator of growing support for DA in Stellenbosch with 61.9 % (Cape Times, 24.04.08) of the people giving them their vote, although this gain was mostly among the coloured communities. Local elections have a different dynamics than the

¹⁰ Larry Zietsman. February 2007. *Recent changes in the population structure of Stellenbosch Municipality*. Cited in Stellenbosch Municipality IDP 2008. The study uses population census data from 1970 to 2001 to project the total population in 2006.

general elections but a change of power in Stellenbosch council in the upcoming 2011 municipal elections seems probable if the trend continues.

The preferential treatment given to the coloureds during apartheid has created enduring divides between the coloured and the black population.

“Coloureds think they are racially superior to blacks. They also think that affluent people have more rights intellectually. People were socialised through racial divides and this creates dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. Apartheid has been highly successful; even though it is no longer written in the law it is still alive in the minds of a significant number of people” (Researcher 1, 19.10.08)

Because of the historical “special treatment” of the coloureds, most policies aimed at providing economic empowerment, target socio-economic inequality and secure redistribution, have focused on black people and thereby excluded huge sections of the marginalised coloured population. As a result, a new perception of preferential treatment of black people has emerged (Millstein 2008), which the statement from a coloured ward committee member (19.11.2008) explicitly describes: “Now this is going to make me look racist, but nothing will happen here [in Cloetesville] because they [ANC] don’t provide anything. They only provide the black areas”. Race is still a crucial component of social, cultural, and political identities despite the commitment to the building of a non-racial democracy, and political support for policy decisions and political parties mainly follows racial lines. The everyday context is more complex than racial identities but even though issues of poverty and grievances are cross-racial, these identities inform what goes on at the community level and city level (Millstein 2008). How this impact is manifested at the local scale will be taken a closer look at through the analysis of the politics of participation in Stellenbosch Municipality.

The centralising tendencies of the ANC must be seen light of these Western Cape tensions. The strong position of the DA in the Western Cape is perceived as a threat to ANC power and the last time Cabinet convened before the general election, the 15th of April 2009, a controversial constitutional amendment was approved. The Constitutional 17th Amendment Bill will empower central government to intervene in the affairs of local government without having to change the law each time (Business Day, 17.04.2008). According to government spokesperson, Themba Maseko, the Bill

is intended to allow central government to take control of local government in order to facilitate service delivery and to achieve regional economies of scale. The amendment was primarily directed at the implementation of the regional electricity distribution system (REDS), which has met considerable resistance from municipalities, especially from Cape Town. Maseko continued to say that The Bill could then help “bring back into line those municipalities that defied government policy”. Helen Zille (DA), Cape Town mayor, reacted vehemently to the Bill and accused the ANC of wanting to change the constitution so that they can control local government even if they lose that power at the ballot box. ”This will enable a centralised ANC to severely limit the mandate of elected local government, especially where the ANC does not govern and where local authorities legitimately refuse to implement ANC policies,” (Cape Times, 16.04.2008). The amendment became an election issue and Zille claimed that this was proof of ANC’s wish to reduce local government to administrative arms of central government. Government asserted that the Bill was so widely phrased because by continually changing the constitution, uncertainty would arise. The consequences of the Amendment remain to be seen but irrespective of the consequences, it is seen as an effort to further centralise state power. The amendment is intended to be applied on the electricity sector but in theory central government has now increased its ability to effectively enforce all its policies locally if municipalities do not follow them.

Development local government face the dual challenge of operating efficiently and at the same time include citizens in local governance. The main institutional intervention in post-apartheid South Africa is integrated development planning and this process embodies both objectives of local government; poverty reduction through effective service delivery and democratisation through public participation in planning and development. Hence, the potential conflicts between these two objectives are played out in the individual municipalities.

Structuring participation: IDP and the ward committee system

The two most important mechanisms for structuring participation are the integrated development plan and the ward committees. The integrated development planning process aims at integrating all spheres of government as well as bringing together municipality and communities. It serves as the key element in facilitating the objectives of DLG, and the IDP is the leading instrument of local planning in South Africa. IDP was first introduced in 1996 as an amendment to the Local Government Transition (1993), and was further elaborated on and clarified in the White Paper on Local Government (1998) and the Local Government Municipal Systems Act (2000). The IDP supersedes all other plans that guide development at the local level and should operate holistically and inter-departmentally. The Stellenbosch IDP from 2003 states that the IDP is:

the single, inclusive and strategic plan for the development of the municipality which (a) links, integrates and coordinate plans and takes into account proposals for the development of the municipality; (b) aligns the resources and capacity of the municipality with the implementation of the plan and (c) forms the policy framework and general basis on which annual budgets must be based. The IDP is the principle strategic planning instrument which guides and informs all development, and all decisions with regard to planning, management and development, in the municipality.

The Systems Act states that an IDP should include the municipal council's vision for the long-term development of the municipality. Emphasis is put on identifying the most critical development needs as well as an assessment of the existing level of development. This analysis forms the basis for the council's development priorities for the elected term and should consider the need for social and economic advancement of the disadvantaged sections of the community. The IDP must describe in detail the strategies for realising these priorities complete with time frames and an assessment of the resources needed to carry them out. Lastly, a spatial dimension must be included which guides the physical implementation of the development objectives.

The IDP should be used as the main vehicle for organising grassroots developments and public participation. The Systems Act describes how the local community should be consulted on the development of the needs and priorities in the IDP and participates in the drafting of the IDP. The municipality must identify the

relevant stakeholders from state organs, the business sector, and civil society who should be included in the process. However, the IDP presents a challenge to local government who, prior to 1994, was mainly concerned with service delivery and the implementation of regulations (Theron 2005). The first round of IDPs was mostly run by private consultants as the capacity of many local authorities was weak. The quality of IDPs has gradually improved although still only 37% of municipalities have the independent capacity to develop effective IDPs (Harrison 2008). The scope of municipal planning has also expanded and the ideal of a participatory process has in many instances been over-run by an increasingly technocratic approach to planning (Harrisson 2008).

According to Piper & Deacon (2008), there are three substantial elements of participatory governance: the redefinition of municipality, requirements for public participation, and ward committees. The Municipal Systems Act includes the community, together with councillors and administration, in the legal definition of a municipality. This was an act of great symbolic importance. The apartheid system was based on the belief that people should be treated as subjects who needed to be controlled and ruled over, effectively excluding non-whites from being citizens. Including the community then, symbolised the new non-racial democracy where popular education and mobilisation could contribute to the people expressing citizenship instead of being reduced to mere beneficiaries of development (Cornwall & Coelho 2008). A continuation of this thinking involved the requirements set for public participation in various decision-making processes. These objectives were to be realised through the ward committee “The object of a ward committee is to enhance participatory democracy in local government.” (Structures Act 1998, Section 72(3)).

The Systems Act lays out the details of the procedures that must be in place to promote community involvement. These include the receipt, processing and consideration of petition and complaints by members of the local community, notification and public comment procedures, public meetings and hearings, consultative sessions with locally recognised community organisations and where appropriate with traditional authorities, and reporting back to the local community.

These procedures should facilitate participation in the preparation, implementation and review of the IDP, performance managements system, preparation of budget, and strategic decisions relating to municipal services.

The ward committee is mentioned in the White Paper on Local Government (1998) and is elaborated on further in the Municipal Structures Act. Municipalities have the opportunity to establish ward committees in each ward. Government has recently signalled that they want to make ward committees compulsory for all municipalities (Piper & Deacon 2008). The ward committee is chaired by a ward councillor, and consists of up to ten additional representatives. The representatives should represent a diversity of interests and ensure the equal participation of women. Representatives can be elected on the grounds of either a sectoral representation system or a geographical representation system. The municipality, in consultation with the ward councillors, decide on which system is best suited for the individual ward.

Integrated development planning in Stellenbosch Municipality

Stellenbosch has received a lot of acclaim for their integrated development plan. The municipalities have a relatively solid capacity in its administration and the IDP for 2007-2011 is now under its second review. The review process starts every year in August with the development of a detailed schedule for the whole financial year showing all the activities related to the IDP and the budget. The analysis phase starts in September with community input and performance analysis of the municipality. The community is mainly involved through the ward committees, while other important stakeholders are consulted at the Mayoral Listening Campaign sessions (including Stellenbosch University, the Afrikanerbond, and the Church Council).¹¹ These inputs inform the preparations of the municipality's strategy for the next financial year. A draft IDP and budget is then compiled by the Department of Strategic Services before it is sent out to stakeholders again for comments. The final IDP is adopted by Council by the end of May.

¹¹ Part of the "Let's get Stellenbosch Talking" campaign. For further elaboration: see chapter 5

The Stellenbosch IDP is well integrated with performance management and the budget and goes through a fairly extensive participation process. However, by channelling community participation almost exclusively through ward committees, this participation takes place in an invited space with a pre-defined neo-liberal agenda that excludes the issues of power inequalities. Stellenbosch municipality consists of different geographical areas with huge differences in racial, economic, social, and political capacities. Simply including citizens in governance does not take into account the inequalities in pre-conditions for participation and allows people of power to use inclusion as a control and domination mechanism over poorer communities. (Clever 2001).

The municipal officials highlighted the role of the IDP in improving communication between departments as the need for greater inter-departmental integration has been identified as a pressing need. The Department of Strategic Services has also expressed the need to improve communication between the different departments and the community. Structuring participation in IDP through the ward committees is a strategy to integrate all departments in the participation process.¹²

IDP and the functions and powers of the ward committee system

Stellenbosch Municipality is one of the few municipalities in the Western Cape that has successfully implemented the ward committee system (Davids 2005). Ward-based planning is seen as the most important structure for realising community input to the IDP process. However, the ward committee system has been heavily criticised as it is potentially problematic to place great powers in the hands of the administration and ward councillors when the ward committees are only allocated a strict advisory role.

The function and powers of ward committees are regulated by several pieces of legislation. The Municipal Structures Act (Section 74 (a,b)) states that ward committees “may make recommendations on any matters affecting its ward (i) to the ward councillor; or (ii) through the ward councillor, to the metro or local council, the executive committee, the executive mayor or the relevant metropolitan sub council: and have such duties and powers as the metro or local council may delegate to it in

¹² Interview, municipal official, 29.10.2008

terms of section 32.” In this view, ward committees are envisaged to principally serve as an advisory body to the ward councillor. However, they may be delegated greater powers if this is the municipality’s interest. The “Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of Ward Committees” (Notice 965 of 2005) issued by DPLG modified the extent to which power could be delegated to the ward committees. The Guidelines held that no executive powers could be transferred to ward committees and instead highlighted their role in communication and mobilisation. Hence, the primary purpose of the ward committee is to “create formal unbiased communication channel... between community and council” (Notice 965 of 2005 Section 5(3)(b)).

“Policy and Procedures for Ward Committees”, adopted by Stellenbosch Municipality in 2006, elaborates on the means of establishing an information channel: the ward committee should advise and make recommendations to the ward councillor on matters and policy affecting the ward, assist the councillor in identifying challenges and needs of residents, disseminate information in the ward concerning municipal affairs such as the budget, IDP and service delivery, receive queries and complaints from residents and communicate them to council, ensure interaction between community and municipality by organising ward meetings and other development forums, and interact with community organisations on matters affecting the ward. The mobilising role of ward committees is to be achieved through attending to all matters that affect the community and act in its best interest. In addition, ward committees should ensure the active participation by the community in service payment campaigns, the IDP process, the budget process, decisions on provision of municipal services, and decisions about by-laws.

The Notice (965 of 2005) implies a double movement for powers of ward committees. On the one hand, decision-making powers at the ward level are severely limited by prohibiting any real political decentralisation. On the other, specifying that all central municipal processes should pass through the ward committee increases the deliberative function of ward committees. Another significant effect of the Notice (965 of 2005) is the representative legitimacy given to the ward committee. According to Section 5(3)(a) the ward committee is an “official specialised participatory structure in the municipality”. This near exclusive claim to legitimacy is problematic in terms of interests that are not being attended to through the official

structures. The ward committee is a highly regulated space and it is not a free space for all actors. Local communities are heterogeneous places with multiple identities and agendas (Mohan & Stokke 2008). Structuring participation only through invited spaces excludes other forms of participation¹³ as invented spaces of participation play an important role in expanding and developing democracy. An expression of this is the wave of popular protest over the poor performance of local government that South Africa has experienced in the recent years: over 5000 protests were reported in 2004 alone (Piper & Deacon 2008). It has been suggested that these protests forced the government to take action to assure voters in front of the 2006 municipal elections. The deployment of community development workers was one of the measures taken, and ward committees have received substantial affirmation as a result of this concern to improve the responsiveness and accountability of local government (Piper & Deacon 2008). Still, central government has to a large degree framed invented spaces as uncooperative and occupied by the “ultra-left”, thereby delegitimizing alternative expressions of citizenship. Miraftab and Wills (2005) point to the construction of the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign as “free riders embedded in a practice of non-payment,” which effectively discredit them as relevant voices for civil society. Other NGOs and CBOs that take part in invited spaces are presented as “rightful” and “authentic” voices of the poor. Miraftab (2004) has underlined the importance of expanding the arenas of participation to include both invited and invented spaces of citizenship, and that also insurgent practices has the potential to build inclusive citizenship from below. However, the creation and usages of these spaces are contingent upon the politics of the various actors, relations, partnerships, and scales that participate in local governance structures (Vogt Evensen 2007).

The development of ward committees and ward-based planning

When the Western Cape Minister of Local Government, Pierre Uys (NNP/DP¹⁴), published the types of municipalities to be established in the Western Cape after the

¹³ Interview, researcher 1, 19.11.2008

¹⁴ Democratic Party had a short-lived merger with the New National Party from 2000 to 2001 which led to the formation of DA. NPP later left the party and allied itself with the ANC. NNP was disbanded in 2005 and all NPP members of parliament joined the ANC.

2000 local government elections, he did not provide the option of creating municipalities with a ward participatory system. He claimed that the Western Cape municipalities were not ready for this system. The ANC reacted vigorously to this decision and accused the NNP/DP coalition of disregarding democratic and accountable government for local communities. With the floor-crossing¹⁵ of politicians in 2002/2003 the political control of Western Cape shifted from DA to an ANC/NNP coalition. This paved the way for the implementation of the ward participatory system, and in 2002 the DA-favoured system of executive committee system changed to the ANC-favoured executive mayoral committee system together with a ward participatory system (Davids 2005). The transition to a mayoral executive committee system also involved a centralisation of power at the local level. As opposed to the executive committee system where all parties must be represented in the same proportion as parties are represented in the full council, the mayor can decide who to include in the executive mayoral committee and does not have to include opposition parties. In Stellenbosch the Mayoral Committee consists of six councillors (of which only four are ward councillors), in addition to the mayor and deputy mayor, who are all representatives for the dominant coalition in council.

Because the ward participatory system was not implemented in Stellenbosch before 2003, prior to that time Area Development Forums (ADFs), based on its nine development areas, were seen as the main mechanisms for structured community participation in local government. The ADFs comprised of various community structures and organisations operating within each development area. During the development of the first Stellenbosch IDP in 2001, two representatives from each ADF were elected onto an IDP Representative Forum (IDP RepForum) together with the municipal Executive Committee and representatives from municipal-wide organisations. The IDP RepForum had many shortcomings and the experiences from this process have to a large extent shaped the present ward committee system in Stellenbosch. Most importantly, the IDP RepForum was seen as a “hanging structure” where important issues raised by the community could not be addressed because they did not directly relate to the IDP process. There was also a problem of representation,

¹⁵ Floor crossing in South Africa was a controversial system under which Members of Parliament, Members of Provincial Legislatures and Local Government councillors could change political party (or form a new party) during specific window periods and take their seats with them when they did so. Floor crossing in South Africa was abolished in January 2009. (idasa.org.za)

as the IDP RepForum did not ensure the participation of women or other marginalised groups. Because the ADFs' boundaries did not correspond with ward boundaries, some councillors felt that individual representatives in the forum were sidelining them (Davids 2005).

The development of the new ward committee system was therefore committed to creating a structure that could address the community's needs as a whole and ensure the representation of all sectors. Stellenbosch Municipality has done away with the IDP RepForum and channels all input into the IDP process through ward committees and their ward plans, and other identified stakeholders in the communities. The planned outcome of this restructuring is to provide better representation, thus creating a greater sense of ownership by all actors in the municipality.

Stellenbosch Municipality's main strategy for community participation is ward-based planning, which is believed to "ensure a fair distribution of scarce resources throughout the municipal area and promotes the principles of developmental local government" (Draft Stellenbosch Municipality IDP 2009), and the ward committees should facilitate dialogue between the municipality and the community. The municipality felt that the national government's idea of community-based planning was too complicated to carry out locally. Instead, Stellenbosch wanted to channel participation through the development of individual ward plans, in order to let people go in to specific details for their community. The key questions addressed in the ward plans include: What is good in our ward? What is bad in our ward? What do we want our ward to look like? What are the immediate priorities (over the next financial year)? What are the medium term priorities (over the next five years)? What are the long-term priorities (beyond five years)? The ward plans serve both as a plan of action for the individual ward, and as an input to the municipal IDP process. The individual ward is from the 2009 /2010-budget year allocated R123 000, which is at free disposal of the ward. These funds are spent on various things. One of the town wards has decided to spend the money on traffic calming every year until their traffic calming plan is carried out, while Kayamandi felt the need to strengthen law

enforcement during Christmas and New Years.¹⁶ These funds are not sufficient to address the more serious needs of the ward and therefore all major priorities in the ward plans are forwarded to the IDP.

This constructed invited space would ideally serve as “a bottom-up approach by involving the ward committees in a more *structured* way through a ward-based planning approach,”(Stellenbosch Municipality IDP 2008, my emphasis). The municipality sees the ward-based planning system as designed to promote community action and encourages communities to take responsibility for their own development. In addition, it is envisioned to help speed up the implementation of the IDP objectives through creating collective ownership of the process by ward councillors, community members, business community, non-governmental and community organisations, and other local stakeholders.

The realisation of these objectives depends on the prevailing power relationships that exist within Stellenbosch and there are many questions that remain unanswered by the IDP. What consequences follow from the strictly advisory role of ward committees? How successful is the ward committee in fulfilling its mandate of communication and mobilisation? Experiences from Cape Town show that invited spaces of participation are contested spaces and might be replaced or challenged by invented spaces of participation. These questions will be addressed in the next chapter on the politics of participation in Stellenbosch municipality.

Concluding remarks

The two most important mechanisms for structuring participation in developmental local government are the integrated development plan and the ward committee system. The implementation of IDP through the ward committee system in Stellenbosch municipality poses a promising opportunity for a structured and continuous public participation. However, the ward committees have not been granted

¹⁶ From IDP review meetings 23.10.2008 & 28.10.2008.

executive powers and serve only as advisory bodies, which severely limit their opportunity to influence municipal decision-making and implementation of policies. Making wards the primary site of engagement between the municipality and the community also contribute to fragment public participation as there are no structures that unite the ward committees. The power to coordinate input from all wards within a municipality rests with the administration. The shift to an executive mayoral system centralises power at the local level and reduces the relative influence of the wards that are not represented on the committee.

Decentralisation in South Africa can be characterised as an administrative reform where certain decision-making powers and management responsibilities have been delegated to local government. There is also a degree of devolution as executive powers are transferred to municipal councils. This is in line with the general trend in developing countries where some powers are devolved but the central state still retains some sort of control mechanisms. The recent example of the 17th Amendment to the Constitution granting powers to central government to intervene in municipal affairs serves as a clear indication of this. Also, the core responsibilities of social welfare still lie with provincial and national government. Budgets are not substantially larger even though municipality size and responsibilities have increased after amalgamation. Thus, the Stellenbosch municipality has restricted capacity to achieve poverty reduction and is reduced to carry out implementation of higher level directives. Similarly, public participation is reduced to giving advice rather than making empowered decisions.

5. The politics of participation in Stellenbosch municipality

Stellenbosch municipality is by many seen as a strong and well-functioning municipality; it has a comprehensive integrated development plan and is one of the few municipalities in the Western Cape that has successfully implemented the ward committee system. The municipality recently initiated a public participation campaign, *Let's get Stellenbosch talking*, which aims at engaging key stakeholders in local government “in order for integrated development planning to be a process that talks to the real needs of the people of Greater Stellenbosch and that exceeds the legislative requirements of ensuring proper community involvement.” The main tool for achieving this objective is the development of individual ward plans through ward-based planning.

Fieldwork was carried out during October and November 2008 and as such coincided with the second revision of Stellenbosch municipality's integrated development plan for 2007-2011. This chapter deals with the local politics of institutionalised spaces for public participation and how the power relations in Stellenbosch municipality affect the nature and outcome of participatory processes and practices.

Understanding community participation in Stellenbosch

As discussed in the theoretical framework, public participation has numerous meanings and implications. Mainstream development approaches have tended to view participation as inclusion of “beneficiaries” (Cooke & Kothari 2001) and as such advocated the design of appropriate institutional structures to facilitate this inclusion. However, in order for public participation to be substantive, citizens need to engage the state in a way that goes beyond the mainstream agenda. The notion of “citizenship participation” (Gaventa 2002) places participation within a broader socio-political context where people extend their rights and status as members of a political community. The kind of participation that is taking place in and through the ward committees needs to be investigated in order to understand community participation in Stellenbosch municipality.

From a local government perspective community participation is mainly understood in three different ways: as empowering the public, as consulting the public, and as informing the public (Theron 2008, Municipal official 1 29.10.08). Stellenbosch municipality makes use of all of these participation strategies at different times and in different processes. As a general information strategy the municipality has a website (www.stellenbosch.gov.za) that is updated regularly which contains information about the municipal structures and representatives and information about how to reach them, an e-library of municipal policies, plans and reports, schedule for portfolio and council meetings (agenda and minutes can be obtained from the public library or at the municipal headquarters), tenders and notices, as well as the opportunity to sign up for a newsletter. In addition, the municipality use the local media to advertise and communicate with the public.

In terms of consulting the public, the municipality (through the ward councillor) is obliged to carry out public meetings in all wards twice a year. These are formal meetings where municipal officials meet with communities for an open discussion and Q&A sessions. Interviews revealed that community meetings are not necessarily taking place twice a year but the frequency is rather a result of public demand for these meetings. A DA councillor in one of the town wards said that “ by law I must have two big public meetings a year; I’ve never had one. I’ve had two in one part of my ward where there’s a need for it”.¹⁷ This statement was strengthened many times by municipal officials who described different cultures of participation across the communities:

”Look, public participation also differs in different areas. Like white people in Stellenbosch are very apathetic towards whatever happens, you know, unless it’s the town centre or they want to write down something of historical importance or whatever, then people jump up. It’s all just a small amount of people. But in a place like Kayamandi, if you want to develop like the Kayamandi tourism corridor or a new housing development and you don’t involve the people you will never get the project from the ground. It’s as easy as that, because people want to be part of the project from the start. So if you don’t involve the people you have no project. And that’s the case in most of the previously...[disadvantaged] you know, the coloured and black areas” (Municipal official 1, 29.10.08).

¹⁷ Interview, DA councillor 3, 10.11.2008

The demand for public meetings is highest in the historically disadvantaged areas and is illustrated by Cloetesville where there are usually four public meetings a year.¹⁸ The coloured and black communities are the ones who depend the most on services from local government and as such have higher stakes in making themselves heard. Similarly, these population groups were denied citizenship during apartheid, and the demand and need for transferring democratic potential to the community level (Avritzer 2002) is more explicit in Cloetesville and Kayamandi. An expression of this is the tendency for community meetings in Cloetesville to become "disrupted" as participants represent a diversity of interests which should be addressed in a short amount of time.¹⁹ To make up for the limitations of public meetings, another strategy aimed at consulting the public is the creation of decentralised offices for the community development workers. These offices are situated in the communities and are mostly in walking distance for all the residents they are supposed to assist. The CDWs disseminate information and respond to enquiries from the community.

The main strategy for achieving empowerment through participation is ward-based planning through the ward committees. The municipality believes that developing ward plans that are connected to the IDP represent a "problem analysis approach" (Theron 2008) that facilitates planning input, which in turn equals empowerment. However, the municipality's understanding of empowerment will be challenged in this chapter: if empowerment involves decentralised decision-making, to what extent is this attainable when the ward committees are merely advisory bodies?

Public participation in a complex political context

The Stellenbosch Town Council consists of 37 councillors. Of these, 19 councillors were elected directly as ward councillors and the remaining 18 were elected on the basis of proportional votes cast for their political parties. The main decision-making body of Council is the Mayoral Committee, which consists of the Executive Mayor, the Deputy Executive Mayor and six councillors. The post of Mayor and the quest for

¹⁸ Interview, municipal official 3, 20.11.2008.

¹⁹ Interview, municipal official 3, 20.11.2008

dominance in the Council has been a matter of close competition the last years and the political climate plays a vital role in understanding the conflict between service delivery and participation processes. This dynamic is essential for the analysis of public participation in ward committees in light of politicisation, racial identities, and the power relations between political parties and communities.

Stellenbosch has a very unstable political setup as a result of ANC and DA having almost equal support among the people. Since 2002 the control of Stellenbosch council has changed three times, from ANC to DA and back to ANC again. In the 2006 municipal elections the ANC won 16 seats, while the DA won 15, in the 37-seat council. With the support of the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP), the United Democratic Movement (UDM) and the Kayamandi Civics Alliance (KCA), DA was able to form a coalition government with 19 votes in total. This meant that they were controlling the council by a single vote- a single person. According to an ANC Minister of Parliament assigned to Stellenbosch Municipality, André Gaum, the DA won by offering top jobs to Kulile Shubani of the UDM and Patrick Swartz from KCA. He claimed that the KCA voted against the ANC because they both have interests in Kayamandi. The ANC secured 90% of the votes in Kayamandi and Gaum went on to say "we negotiated with them [KCA] [To secure support] and they wanted us to get rid of ANC leaders because they have personal differences with them, and we couldn't concede that" (Cape Argus, 16.03.06). A by-election in ward 17 in March 2008 led to major changes in the Council when a DA councillor, Myra Linders, left the party and stood as an independent candidate. The KCA also left the DA, and when Myra Linders won the by-election she joined forces

with the ANC and KCA, changing the balance of power in the Council (Cape Times, 09.04.08). Hence, at the time of fieldwork in October 2008 the political configuration was as follows:

Political Party	No of councillors
ANC	17
KCA	1
Independent	1
DA	14
ACDP	2
UDM	1
ID	1
Total	37

Source: Stellenbosch Municipality, Integrated Development Plan 2007-2011

As of 8th of April 2008, the Executive Mayor of Stellenbosch has been Patrick Swartz from the KCA, the same councillor that helped form the previous DA-alliance.

Political sensitivity and implications for service delivery

Interviewees from all categories emphasized the negative consequences of the political sensitivity in the municipality. From the point of view of the administration of local government provision of services is delayed because of a lack of consensus in Council. This also affects the wish to have extensive public participation. While one of the officials highlighted the importance and need for community participation, the official also added that:

”...although it [participation] can also delay important service delivery quite a lot. In some circumstances in Stellenbosch you will never get consensus on a thing. Like on the town planning side. For the last 20 years people have been fighting on the spatial framework with the result that Stellenbosch hasn't had a spatial plan for the town in 20 years. So it is just going in this participation circle over and over. People are not satisfied whatever you do. They will always be dissatisfied. So I think you can also overdo it. There's a point in time that the councillors are by law the only body that can ultimately take decisions. So they should take up that responsibility. Sometimes they don't want to. Especially in a place like Stellenbosch where the politics are so sensitive. So they don't want to take long-term decisions and unpopular decisions. But that's what they must do. So the public sometimes holds the councillors to ransom, through all kinds of ways and means,” (municipal official 1, 29.10.08)

This tension indicates that there is a real division between the objectives of efficiency and participation in the developmental local government structure. Stellenbosch municipality is not able to juggle the complex institutional and political environment in a way that creates positive-sum scenarios for both participation and efficiency (Heller 2008).

The lack of consensus on a spatial framework for Stellenbosch municipality as a whole has resulted in a lack of direction in the implementation of municipal projects and made long term strategic planning difficult. ”In Stellenbosch everything is upside down. Here they do the project and there's no proper overarching planning or framework. [...] Here most of it is done on ad hoc basis and it's very bad for Stellenbosch.”²⁰ The volatile political situation creates reluctance among politicians to take responsibility for the long-term development of the area.

The politicisation of local government has implications for the management of the administration. Although the appointment of officials in theory is independent from party politics, the Stellenbosch case shows that the change of council power is accompanied by replacements in the municipal administrative staff.²¹ The political leadership of the municipality appoints officials who support their vision and programmes. They fear that officials working under the previous coalition will make work difficult for the new coalition and subsequently weaken their electoral base. “They will put you to failure. You see, because they will not listen to the grievances and they will not do anything about it. Therefore the community now starts to

²⁰ Interview ward committee member 1, 12.11.2008

²¹ Interview Municipal official 3, 20.11.2008, interview DA ward councillor 3, 10.11.2008

complain that nothing is happening.”²² These replacements have a negative impact on the effectiveness of local government. Training of new staff and new directions cause delays in service delivery and project implementation.

....in a way its affecting you because there will be plans on the table and when a new political party comes in, those plans will just be wiped of and they will say we want this and you just have to follow what they want. So it's not about a new political party comes and just go on like the way you normally do, because every political party wants something different (municipal official 3, 20.11.08)

The same way that politics affect the bureaucratic practices in the municipality, the change of council power also leads to a redirection of resources. The support base for the different political parties has a clear spatial distribution. The wards in Town and Cloetesville all have DA councillors, while Kayamandi is an ANC strong hold. Sources in the administration and representatives from DA wards expressed concerns about the present coalition's focus on the wards in Kayamandi. They felt that the needs of the other areas are not taken care of and that resources were being redirected towards Kayamandi.

The shift will be out of town towards Kayamandi and to ward where the councillor is ANC. Like now in ward 10 and 11 [Cloetesville], which is DA councillors, I don't really see anything happening there. I don't know why. It's a coloured ward and they should treat that the same way they treat Kayamandi. They need development and everything and it's just not anything happening. (Municipal official 3, 20.11.08)

This concern was especially evident in the case of Cloetesville where many of the needs mirror those of Kayamandi. Both areas have high levels of poverty and unemployment and the priorities listed in their respective ward plans have many similarities, with housing, land for housing, job creation and law enforcement ranking as the most important issues to address.

In order for local government to be effective in this volatile political environment there needs to be established a broad consensus on the development vision for the whole of Stellenbosch (Visser 2001).

Ward committees' (in)dependence of party politics

Piper & Deacon (2008) ask if ward committees offer an opportunity for local communities to hold officials and councillors accountable independently of party

²² Interview ANC councillor 2, 06.11.2008

agendas, or whether they simply are an innovation dominated by and advancing the interests of the local party branch. They point to the divergent conceptions of democratic engagement in participatory governance at the municipal level and local government electoral politics. The former has a non-partisan view of democratic engagement between municipality and residents where the community is segmented socially (e.g. youth, women, disabled) rather than by party. Conversely, the latter perceive local engagement primarily as party competition for votes. Although this divergence exists, policy and legislation explicitly promote the non-partisan nature of ward committees; ward committees should be dedicated to advancing the collective interest of the ward. How likely is it that the ward committee is capable of playing this role given the “dominant party syndrome” present in South African politics (Piper & Deacon 2008)? ANC’s overwhelming majority in most of the country leaves the party in danger of taking power for granted. This could lead to ANC becoming less responsive, less accountable to constituencies, intolerant of civil society, and mismanaging office, which in turn pose a challenge for ward committees to serve as a non-partisan mechanism of elite accountability.

Even though Stellenbosch holds a variety of political parties, thus making it less likely to suffer under the dominant party syndrome, ward committees are not able to play the non-partisan role envisioned for them. Piper & Deacon’s (2008) case study of Msunduzi Municipality in the KwaZulu Natal Province shares many of the characteristics of Stellenbosch such as the diversity of political parties, which should encourage greater accountability. The case study, similar to my findings from Stellenbosch, shows that where ward committees actually were functioning they tended to be colonised by party political agendas. This resonates with Mohan and Stokke’s (2008) warning of romanticising local civil society. Both the neo-liberal belief in civil society’s ability to hold local authorities accountable and the post-structuralist vision of civil society as an arena for opposition to the technocratic agenda seem unrealistic in this context. Stellenbosch shows signs of an overly politicised ward committee system, where a “winner takes it all” mentality is dominating the council. This competition hampers the ability of council to address issues concerning Stellenbosch as a whole, and has a negative impact on cooperation within council, between council and the individual wards, and between council and the administration.

This mentality spreads to the individual wards where the identity of the ward is largely based on the party membership card of the ward councillor. Party politics is making it more difficult to look after the diversity of interests in the wards as every issue becomes a political question. NGOs complained of the delay of the implementation of decisions or ward councillors reversing decisions because the issue at hand had become too controversial.²³ Another example is the description from a ward committee member in Kayamandi of the political power struggle in areas where both the ANC and the KCA have mandates:

“The only thing is power, power, power. Everybody wants power. When the ANC was alone they fought, they helped, but now when they’re with the KCA everyone wants to show that they are boss” (Ward committee member 7, 28.11.08).

Similarly, given the legacy of racial segregation in the region and the connected political affiliation there exists a real threat of patronage outcomes of decentralised participation with the elite capture of resources coming through local government. The politicisation of the ward committee system creates winners and losers both within the party political system but also between communities. This tendency is visible in the redirection of resources within the municipality towards areas where the dominant coalition has its power base. However, the strong opposition in Stellenbosch, because of the coloured vote, has the potential to hold the local elite accountable. The political competition should mean that the coalition in charge has a greater incentive to perform. Thus, local governance would be more accountable and responsive. Instead, the delicate political climate leads to inter-municipal or inter-community contestation rather than creating real opposition from the community to the ward councillor.

Even though the ward committees are connected to the political power struggle they still may play a role in facilitating increased public participation, given that such participation coincide with local party agendas. Ward committees can therefore create greater access to decision-making but do not make way for new voices (Piper & Deacon 2008). However, this process cannot take place without institutional support that capacitates the ward committees and creates platforms for interaction between the different communities.

²³ Interview, NGO 1, 25.11.2008

The importance of institutional support

Ward committees are dependent on significant municipal support in order to function according to its mandate. Piper & Deacon (2008) identify four important tasks for the municipality to carry out in order to create viable and effective ward committees. First of all, the municipality needs to ensure the correct constitution of ward committees. Second, ward councillors and ward committee members need to be properly trained in order to carry out their responsibilities. Third, the municipality need to resource committees, and lastly, the role of the ward committees in council needs to be clearly defined. In Stellenbosch all wards, except one, have elected ward committees in place. However, the issue of capacity and training was a recurrent theme in many of the interviews. Training of ward committee members and councillors, or lack thereof, differed between the wards on Town, Cloetesville and Kayamandi. The town wards were mostly described as being run by competent and experienced people. Ward 6 for instance has a retired town planner, a former CEO of a national company and a Doctor in educational maths on the committee. This description was rare in Cloetesville and Kayamandi wards. Several ward committee members in Kayamandi complained about insufficient training. They felt the ward committees were not functioning because the members were insecure about their roles and responsibilities, as well as how the municipal processes work. Ward councillors and members in the town wards also complained about a lack of “functional literacy” among many of the ward councillors because of the lack of training. By failing to provide proper training to the areas that need it the most, the municipality is reproducing unequal power relationships formed by apartheid structures. The previously disadvantaged areas stay marginalised through not having the opportunity to build capacity and confidence in their ward committees. The Stellenbosch administration does not prioritise the advancement of capacity in the ward committees. This seems surprising considering the fact that there has been allocated funds on the municipal budget to train ward committee members for two years already.²⁴ There have been plans to get all the ward committee through a training session on ward plans, the IDP, legislation and the budget but this had not been carried out at the time of fieldwork. A municipal official

²⁴ Interview, municipal official 1, 29.10.2008

explained that the reason for this was a change in Director at the Department of Strategic Services in April 2008; the same time as the new coalition came into power. The informant also indicated that the department had an extensive workload and that training of ward committee was given a low priority.²⁵

The draft version of the IDP for 2009 has listed capacity building for ward committees as one of the main priorities of the Department of Strategic Service. The pressure from ward committees in achieving this is reflected in the reviewed priorities in the ward plans. The issue of training advanced from the 19th most important issue for all of Stellenbosch in the 2008 IDP to 10th most important issue in this year's draft. This advancement is due to a coordinated effort by the three Kayamandi wards, which operate with identical ward plans in order to service the entire community. As such, it also illustrates how important the ward plans can be in influencing the outcome of participation processes, as the strength of cooperative strategic advocacy work.

The issue of resourcing the ward committee is fairly well attended to in Stellenbosch. The Department of Strategic Service has community participation officers responsible for assisting the ward councillors in administrative and secretarial matters and facilitate community input. The ward committees are entitled to free use of venues in municipal buildings (Policy & Procedures for Ward Committees 2006). In addition, CDW are in place in all vulnerable areas and serve as an administrative support for the ward councillor as well as a link to the central municipal administration. The CDWs are provided with offices space in the community they serve in order to be easily accessible. However, the issue of direct resources to ward committee members surfaced as a problem. The Policy and Procedures for Ward Committees state that ward committee members in Stellenbosch are to be paid no remuneration but that they are entitled to be compensated for out of pocket expenses. Ward councillors and ward committee members from the poorer areas identified giving allowance to ward committee members as a way of improving community participation. They felt that this could serve as a motivating factor for the members. Payment was seen as acknowledgement for the work they are doing but also as a

²⁵ Interview, municipal official 1, 29.10.2008

crucial financial support in the effort to help the community. One ward committee member from Kayamandi said that it was difficult to work in the committee because

Sometimes you want to help somebody, sometimes even a child gets hurt around here, because you are in the committee someone will come to you and say "Oh, my child is hurt, cant you help us taking her to the hospital", things like that. And I can't say no, and with the ward committee they are not getting not even a small allowance. You say when you need a phone here is R5 or something: they don't do that to us. We do it voluntarily but sometimes you need that. [...] and then I have to do that and then it's my money. But I can't say no because I'm in the committee, you know, (Ward committee member 7, 28.11.08).

This statement reveals that not only are ward committee members not paid, they are also experiencing economic stress as a result of their community engagement. In poor communities ward committee members are seen as persons of resource who people come to for help. This engagement extends far beyond the official responsibilities of a ward committee member and serves as a security network for residents in disadvantaged areas. The CDWs in Kayamandi also said that they in practice were working 24 hours a day with people calling at all hours, especially on weekends, to get help in relation to sickness or trouble.

The role of ward committees in council is thoroughly accounted for in municipal policies and practices. The ward committees constitute the primary community involvement into the consultation processes concerning the IDP, the budget and by-laws, and this involvement is institutionalised through the ward-based planning.

Invited space: ward-based planning

As mentioned in the previous chapter, ward-based planning serves as the main institutional structure for community participation. The ward committees are important providers of input to integrated development planning, which connects the ward participation to council processes. However, the participatory role of ward committees extends further than just co-governance in planning and implementation. They are representative structures accountable to all sectors and all matters affecting the ward. The ward committees should ideally facilitate participatory processes that deepen the democratic control over decisions that affect the lives of the citizens in

their communities and as such work towards the extension of social rights. Democratisation efforts of strengthening capacity in state and civil society tend to be viewed as separate processes. However, there is a need to create a better understanding of the intersection between these two spheres (Gaventa 2006). In this regard, the ward committees are an arena for dialogue between the municipality and communities.

Invited spaces in South Africa are mainly structured through local government and its councillors. Experiences from other locations in the Western Cape, such as Cape Town, show that these provided spaces are sometimes viewed as insufficient or lacking legitimacy, with the result that citizens invent their own spaces of citizenship expressions (Miraftab & Wills 2005). This is not the reality in Stellenbosch where all stakeholders are sought to be included, and thereby co-opted, in participatory processes. The local administration and ward committees thus effectively control the agenda and there are no competing invented rooms to challenge this domination. One of the ward committee members attributed this lack of contention with apathy and lack of knowledge about the system.²⁶ However, the only organised structure that is choosing not to participate is the NGOs in Kayamandi who do not wish to be controlled by the politicised municipal structures:

Now lately there is a lot of respect between myself and them. Before they wanted, you know the politicians, they always want to take over. But I know how strong I am so I had to put a boundary... I'm taking control of the place" (NGO 2, 26.11.08)

The non-participation of the NGOs is not confrontational and they do engage the local state when they have to. As such, this non-participation first and foremost illustrates the politicisation of the local communities and the municipality which creates an environment that is not conducive to cooperation.

Connecting ward plans to the IDP process

All 19 wards draft their own ward plan, which is reviewed annually in relation to the IDP: "we would like to think of ward-based plans as mini IDPs" (Draft Stellenbosch IDP 2009). The ward plans provide input to the Stellenbosch IDP by providing a

²⁶ Interview, ward committee member 4, 28.11.2008

prioritised list of needs:

“So we evolved the whole thing (ward based planning) over a period of two years. But the basic idea came about that if you talk to the people on the level of Kayamandi, these people, actually all the wards, not only Kayamandi, people like talking about things that they are comfortable with, and people don't like to talk about housing as a strategic thing. So the whole idea of the ward plan is to take the IDP down to the level of the wards, so that when people talk about housing and job creation they talk about their area, what is the problem there. They know the area; they know what the issues in their area are.” (Municipal official 1, 29.10.08)

In September-October each ward is given a list of issues provided by the municipality and asked to select the five most important issues and ranking them from 1 to 5. The ranking is then weighted by giving a score of 5 to the highest and score of 1 to the lowest ranking. These scores are then added up by issue and sorted according to the total score and inform the priorities of the IDP for Greater Stellenbosch. The municipality claims that this process involves the community already at the analysis level, which makes the communities able to set the agenda. Representatives from council and the administration, who drafts an IDP document, process these inputs and make a strategic plan for Greater Stellenbosch. By April the community is then invited again to comment on the draft before it goes to Council for approval in May.

As described in the previous chapter, Stellenbosch Municipality has chosen to dissolve the IDP RepForum and instead rely on the ward plans. The identification of needs is done on the ward level, followed by the compilation of the IDP document by the administration and Mayoral Committee. The compilation process therefore takes place without representatives from the wards, with the exception of the four ward councillors (ANC and independent representative) who serve on the Mayoral Committee. In this way public participation through ward plans becomes fragmented, as there is limited involvement between the analysis phase and the final product. It also centralises power over the IDP process in the Mayoral Committee, which in turn facilitates a greater influence of party politics. The *de facto* influence of the individual ward, or community, is therefore often confined to minor matters in the ward with no real influence on the process for the whole of Stellenbosch Municipality.

Another consequence of this fragmented participation is the lack of understanding in the individual wards of the common needs for the entire area, which also leads to the lack of attention awarded to the general things that people want to be

done in town:

“It only focuses on that specific area. Now, to be quite honest with you traffic calming is not nearly as important as building a clinic in a poor area. So most often it will then go to the clinic or some tourism project, which is not so bad, but then we must be told all those things. So the ward plans are good but they also have a negative side that attention is taken away from things that actually concern us all” (DA ward councillor 1, 10.11.08)

In order to integrate ward committees into the public participation processes of council, Piper & Deacon (2008) suggest the establishment of a ward forum where all ward committees can meet. A ward forum may contribute to a larger degree of communication among the ward committees, which in turn will build a sense of ownership that extends beyond the individual ward's interests. A ward forum could also make ward committees more powerful towards council as it will provide an arena for cooperation on common issues between the wards. Davids' (2005) research on Stellenbosch Municipality confirms the wish by ward committee members to be able to communicate with other wards on a formal basis.

The results of participation

Democratic involvement in local government needs to be assessed in terms of how it actually gives meaning to people (Grugel 2002). The thesis is therefore more concerned about how people perceive the effect of their participation rather than measuring influence in mere budget allocations. Even though democratic institutions are in place, the legitimacy of these institutions is not automatically secured (Gaventa 2006). There is also methodological challenges connected to measuring the impact of participation as it is not possible to analyse pre-defined intentions against actual outcomes as IDP is a “complex, ongoing, interactional process in which capacities for decision-making, joint action and coordinated implementation are built over time, and in which there are multiple intervening variables” (Harrison 2008:322). In the few cases where there have been attempts to measure impact of participation on distribution of resources evidence shows that IDP may contribute to a certain redistribution of resources but there has been no social or economic transformation taking place (Visser 2001).

Informants from all categories expressed a positive attitude towards the concept of ward-based planning. Decision-making at the community level was welcomed as the people's lived experience make them best suited to identify challenges in their own community.²⁷ The IDP was therefore seen as a relevant and important tool for community participation. However, when it came to the implementation of the ward plans and the IDP, informants were very negative:

"I think it's an excellent plan but it's also a wish list. It's a way to find out from the people what they want and what they need, on the other hand you create expectations" (DA councillor 3, 10.11.2008).

The ward plans are seen as unrealistic because too many priorities are identified and the municipality does not have the capacity to deliver on all of them.²⁸ Descriptions of how the same issues were identified year after year without improvements in implementation were common. The lack of progress has negative effects on people's willingness to participate:

"...people are seeing nothing is happening. Every year you come out with IDP meetings, they give their priorities, next year we go out again and nothing has happened to the priorities they have given the last few years. So that makes people a little but reluctant to attend meetings and that makes community participation also difficult" (Municipal official 3, 20.11.08).

Stellenbosch Municipality has in many ways been successful in constituting public participation in the IDP process but the municipality has generally failed to make people believe that they can influence the output of the process:

"...but this is a general government problem, you got good policies but when it comes to the implementation and the oversight function of the implementation, there we lack big time.... and that's why I say they don't give meaning to the process. And they don't respect us as taxpayers participate. Because how can you every year come for the same process and there's no outcome, there are no results. So you make a mockery of the whole system! And we need to give credibility to that system" (Ward committee member 4, 28.11.08).

It seems to be a widespread participation fatigue as people are tired of participating in their own development without seeing meaningful results of their participation (Davids 2005). A ward committee member also said that the IDP process is in danger of losing its legitimacy because people "lose faith in the structure" when they do not

²⁷ Interview, municipal official 1, 29.10.08 & ward committee member 3, 13.11.2008

²⁸ Interview, ward committee member 4, 28.11.2008

see results.²⁹ The ward committee is seen as powerless because no tangible results reach the community. One of the main challenges for Stellenbosch is to raise awareness about the opportunities ward based planning bring about. Research shows that there is limited knowledge among the people about the IDP, the budget, and even who their ward councillor is.³⁰ The issue of insufficient capacity then is not only about local government's inability to deliver but also about capacity shortcomings in civil society. However, it is the responsibility of local government to capacitate civil society in order to achieve meaningful public participation (Systems Act 2000). It is also in the interest of both the administration and ward councillors that civil society understands the process. Increased knowledge about planning will help civil society to understand the process better which may ease the work of local government as the feedback from communities will be more purposeful.

Local government in Stellenbosch faces challenges in communicating properly with communities. The responsibility to carry out public participation is seen as being the sole responsibility of Department of Strategic Services by the other departments in the municipality. The Stellenbosch IDP is therefore used as a tool to "force the departments to talk to the ward committees" because "they are not geared or whatever. It's not part of their way of doing things; to involve the community. Like one year or so ago the department would say that the upgrading of roads or whatever has nothing to do with the community; why should we involve them?"³¹ If the municipality does not communicate progress then how is the community supposed to be aware of developments taking place? Municipal officials and ward councillors need to provide feedback to the community in order to build capacity and to increase the feeling of influence from participating in local government processes.

Representation on the ward committees

As the ward committees are the official specialised participatory structure in the municipality, the issue of representation on the committees is of the highest

²⁹ Interview, ward committee member 7, 28.11.2008

³⁰ Interview, researcher 1, 19.11.2008

³¹ Interview, Municipal official 1, 29.10.2008

importance. The ward committees included in the analysis are based on a sectoral representative system, although some wards with large socio-economic inequalities within its boundaries have taken care to ensure geographical representation of disadvantaged areas.³² The ward committee members are elected to a specific portfolio, which point to a fairly advanced election process (Piper & Deacon 2008) and ensures that the elected members represent relevant civil society structures. Practically all informants felt that all sectors were represented in their respective ward committees.

In the town wards there is a limited interest among the residents to serve on the ward committee. A ward councillor in the area described how he had to approach the relevant structure and ask people to stand for election. Many strong interest groups operate in the Town wards, such as the Ratepayers' Association and the Stellenbosch Interest Group, and they are also represented on the ward committee. However, they often opt to work their own agendas outside the ward committee because they believe that the ward power is limited to minor matters.³³ This scenario seems to be the same in Kayamandi where NGOs make it a point to stay out of the ward committee. However, they stay away from the ward committee for different reasons: is seen as being too politicised and the NGOs are afraid of being "branded" if they get involved.³⁴ Instead, the NGOs engage in their own networks, such as the Kayamandi network. Representation on the ward committees then reflects the differences in power and access to decision-making processes, which in turn affects the relevance awarded to the ward committee in the various communities.

The ward councillors in the area highlighted that they talked to all the stakeholders, including the NGOs, and that no sector was excluded from the ward committee.³⁵ This could mean that the ward councillors are concerned with taking care of all the different stakeholders in the area but inclusion of alternative structures could also lead to inclusionary control (Cohen in Kothari 2001). Even though it seems

³² Interview, DA ward councillor 3, 10.11.2008

³³ Interview, ward committee member 1, 12.11.2008

³⁴ Interview, NGO 1, 25.11.2008

³⁵ Interview, ANC councillor 2, 06.11.2008

as though all sectors are represented in the ward committees, the ward committee is still only advisory and is to a large extent dependent on the actions and capacity of the ward councillor.

The role of ward councillors

Ward councillors serve as the link between municipality and communities and are key figures in creating effective ward committees that are capable of deepening the municipal deliberative process. The ward councillor is responsible for how often the committee meets, what is put on the agenda, what information the ward committee access, and what information from the ward that reaches council. Ward committee members are at the ward councillors' mercy when it comes to forwarding their concerns to council seeing that they only have an advisory role: "If I don't get support from my councillor I don't have powers. I am only advisory."³⁶

The capacity of the ward councillors in Stellenbosch vary between the different wards. The power of the individual ward councillor is to a large degree dependent on the party affiliation of the councillor and which party controls council:

".... you must understand that once any party is in power: whatever plans you had as a ward councillor for that particular ward, whatever grievances they had, if you are not in power you can not implement that. Because this particular coalition takes their own direction, their own strategies in terms of implementing things and in terms of doing things. You are just there and are being beaten by the vote. If the people are voting, they are now out-voted. At the end of the day your ward will suffer 'cause you have nothing to report and you got nothing to say to them" (ANC ward councillor 2, 06.11.08).

This quote by the ANC councillor also point to the recurring theme of politicisation of the ward committee. The ANC ward councillors in Stellenbosch had decided to stay united and no ward councillors left the party to join COPE. A ward committee member in Kayamandi quit the ward committee when he decided to join Cope,³⁷ which indicate that the ward committee is identified by the party affiliation of the ward councillor.

³⁶ Interview, ward committee member 4, 28.11.2008,

³⁷ Interview, ward committee member 6, 25.11.2008

The ward councillor also plays a big part in how the ward committee members are elected. In the town wards the councillors often have to approach people in order to have enough representatives on the committee. The situation is a little different in Cloetesville and Kayamandi where public participation is seen as a more pressing issue,³⁸ which creates more attention around the ward committee. The privileged position of the ward councillor in this respect is especially evident in processes of co-opting new members to the committee in-between elections. The Stellenbosch policy for ward committees states that vacancies are to be filled by the person who received the second highest number of votes in the relevant sector. However, several informants described how the ward councillor often decides who fills in the vacancy.

The introduction of ward plans has to a certain degree altered the power relationship between the ward councillor and the ward committee member. The priorities in the ward plan are developed by the ward committee and other stakeholders in the community, and as such put pressure on the ward councillor to promote the realisation of these priorities. Consequently, the ward committee is in a better position to hold their councillor accountable.

The importance of a strong ward councillor in order to function properly (Piper & Deacon 2008) is illustrated in the difference between DA councillors in Cloetesville and Town. The councillors in Cloetesville felt strongly that they were less influential with the ANC in power while Town councillors did not feel affected in the same way. This goes back to the point of differing capacity among the wards. The town wards are characterised by highly educated and resourceful councillors who have experience in working within the institutions of local government and are therefore better equipped to work the government institutions. Clearly there is a need for municipal support in order to create equal opportunities for participation in municipal decision-making and implementation.

³⁸ Interview, municipal official 1, 29.10.2008

Concluding remarks

The ward-based planning system poses a great opportunity for structured and persistent community participation but faces a number of challenges in making this a substantial form of participation. The highly contested political climate in Stellenbosch has created an overly politicised environment, which to a large extent allows party politics to be dominant. This situation is further accentuated by an explicit politics of race stemming from the demographic composition of the area. The constantly shifting power in council has negative impact on the implementation of development and creates an unpredictable environment in the municipal administration. The ward committees' advisory roles limit their influence towards council and make them dependent on the ward councillor. However, the development of ward plans may to a certain extent balance out the power of the ward councillor.

Informants from all categories are generally positive towards ward-based planning as a provider of input to the IDP process. Still, communities do not see the results of their participation. The history of separate development has created unequal levels of capacity to participate across the different communities, which directly impacts on the relative influence of a specific ward. Stellenbosch Municipality has a solid institutional capacity but fail to train the ward committee members. This favours the continued dominance of historically privileged areas. Hence, a widespread feeling of distrust towards local government and participation fatigue is dominant.

The municipality believes that participation in the ward committees is an empowering strategy that will extend citizenship practices. This is a thinking that is in line with a neo-liberal understanding of the role of local civil society. As such, due to the different understandings of citizenship and the politics surrounding participation, Stellenbosch municipality is far from reaching more radical and substantial understandings of citizenship if issues of power are ignored. The ward committee system needs to be capacitated in order to realise its full potential and address power inequalities.

6. Conclusions

The objective of this thesis was to study the politics of participatory governance processes at the local scale in South Africa. The thesis started by outlining the historical and contemporary context of developmental local government, which led me to the identification of the local case; public participation in Stellenbosch Municipality. The local participation processes was analysed through a theoretical framework concerned with the politics of local participatory governance. The thesis was founded on two research questions and the discussion in the two analysis chapters have built the discussion for answering these questions. In concluding this chapter, I will reflect on the implications of my findings.

Constructing participation through institutional design

What characterise the institutional spaces for local public participation in South Africa and how are they constructed?

The historical role of local government in creating and sustaining inequality and spatial separation, and the subsequent transformation of these institutions, have created a lot of expectations for democratising the role of the post-apartheid developmental local government. Stellenbosch municipality has inherited skewed settlement patterns and the need for redistribution is vital in order to integrate the different communities within its boundaries.

Developmental local government is intended to increase efficiency of development initiatives whilst simultaneously attend to the demand of citizens to participate and engage with local authorities. However, the hierarchical network mode of governance in South Africa has lead to an increasing centralisation of state power, hence limited autonomy for local government and local communities. Still, there are several progressive policies in place to ensure public participation in local governance. The main tool for this is integrated development planning in which the ward committees serve as the link between the municipality and the belonging communities. The implementation of ward-based planning in Stellenbosch has two somewhat conflicting outcomes. On the one hand, in the absence of any real political

decentralisation the strict advisory role of the ward committees severely limit their decision-making powers. On the other hand, the insistence of policy that all central municipal processes should go through the ward committees could potentially enhance their deliberative function.

Considering the history of racial segregation in Stellenbosch, the mere construction of invited space for participation through the ward committees does not address unequal capacity for substantial participation in the different communities. As such, institutional design cannot bring about social, political or economic transformation without acknowledging and challenging power relations within these constructed spaces for participation.

"Too much politics, too little governance"

How does the politics of participatory processes play out in Stellenbosch Municipality?

The institutional space for participation takes place in the context of an overly politicised local environment. The balance of power in the Stellenbosch municipal council is controlled by one vote, and the governing coalition has changed three times just in the past six years. This has negative impact on the predictability and stability of local government, as well as on its ability to deliver on its mandates of poverty reduction and consolidation of democracy.

The party political alignments are distributed along racial and spatial lines. The governing ANC-coalition has its support base in the black township of Kayamandi, while the DA opposition draws their support from the white town wards and the coloured wards in Cloeteville. Because of the politicised institutional climate, the ward councillors are more concerned about protecting their political power than attending to the needs of the community they represent. Hence, given the advisory role of the ward committee, the influence of the ward is dependent on the respective councillor's political power and agenda. At the same time, the historically disadvantaged coloured and black areas have less experience and knowledge about governance processes than the white wards. This obviously affects the capacity of

ward councillors from Cloetesville and Kayamandi to be heard in planning and implementation processes in the municipal administration and council. This is further reinforced by the inability of local government to train ward committee members and citizens. As such, the limited institutional support is not able to build capacity and enthusiasm in the participatory structures, and participation is conducted in a top-down manner.

Stellenbosch has high levels of structured participation but the results of this participation are not necessarily seen in the communities. Interviewees described how the ward committees year after year identified needs through the ward plans without experiencing any developments in their communities, and how this has led to a loss of faith in the participatory structures. Local government ensuring levels of participation then, clearly means little when access is structured from above and the outcomes of the processes are not acceptable to the people. In turn, this will lead to less participation and less engaged citizens, and impact accountability and responsiveness of local government in a negative manner.

The introduction of ward-based planning and the development of individual ward plans may contribute to strengthening the power of the ward committees *vis-a-vis* the ward councillors and the municipal administration. The ward plan clearly states the reality according to the community and can be used to create force behind their demands. However, as a consequence of decentralisation of planning to the ward-level participation becomes fragmented. The communities of Stellenbosch municipality need to create a common vision for an integrated, democratic and prosperous town.

I have argued that the rivalry between ANC and DA in Stellenbosch causes the fragmentation of participation. Even though I call for a more unified approach, I would like to problematise this incentive in the light of the theoretical framework of this thesis. The literature on decentralisation points to the risks of elite capture of resources coming through local government because of a lack of local political competition and accountability. As there is strong political competition in Stellenbosch one would expect this to create accountable local democracy. However,

because Stellenbosch have an overly politicised local government the initial healthy political competition has created rivalry between different political elites instead of ensuring vertical accountability to the citizens.

The idea of democratic decentralisation is based on the notion that local participation will create vertical accountability. However, local participation without real political decentralisation will only lead to "all talk and no action". The opposite scenario of political decentralisation without local accountability will result in elite capture of local government resources and processes. The limited political decentralisation from central government to Stellenbosch municipality, and from the municipality to the ward committees, leaves the ward committees and citizens with plenty of space for participation but with little impact.

Beyond the case of Stellenbosch municipality

Stellenbosch municipality is presented as a best practices example of institutionalising public participation in municipal planning processes. However, as I have argued in this thesis, this is a truth with modifications. The challenge of making analytical generalisations needs to be addressed in a qualitative case study such as this. The case of Stellenbosch municipality is context specific and to what extent can this case contribute to an understanding and preview of other situations?

The main analytical generalisation of this thesis is the modification of the dichotomizing debate on whether public participation is of a tyrannical or transformational nature. Stellenbosch municipality has put in place structured institutional participation which poses a great opportunity for realising citizenship through participation in local government processes. However, the call for a closer attention to the local politics that shape inclusion and exclusion in these structures is supported by this case.

The thesis highlights and supports Miraftab's (2004) distinction between invited and invented spaces. However, the normative superiority awarded to invented (and insurgent) practices of citizenship contributes to creating yet another uniform and unproductive discussion on what constitutes democratic citizenship. The case of

Stellenbosch municipality shows that there is real potential in invited structures such as the ward committees. This is especially true with the development of ward plans, which can provide increased bargaining power for communities in negotiations with the ward councillor and local government. Hence, institutional practice is in constant construction and is shaped by the actors who are a part of it. By paying closer attention to the interaction between different expressions of participation we can avoid falling into the trap of framing all actions that are not invented as being tyrannical. In Stellenbosch this interaction can be seen in the dynamics between the different communities; Town wards do not necessarily want more or deeper participation, whilst the communities of Cloetesville and Kayamandi demand greater accountability from local government and a stronger voice in decision-making processes. It is the movement *between* different spaces of participation that is interesting in terms of how communities with different racial and socio-economic characteristics will demand and need different forms of citizenship practices.

This leads me to the context specific dynamics of politics in the Western Cape province, which Stellenbosch municipality is a part of. The demographic composition of this region differs from the rest of the country with its majority of coloured people. Western Cape is also the only province where a real opposition to ANC exists, precisely because of the different demographics. It is likely that the findings in this thesis will apply to other smaller towns in the province. Millstein's (2008) research on urban governance transformations and community organising in Delft (Cape Town) supports claim that there is need for a more nuanced understanding of local governance processes. As such, the Stellenbosch case is interesting because it seems that even though it refers to a smaller context than Cape Town, and is apparently more successful, it in many ways share the same challenges. Similarly, these common challenges strengthen the critique of the dichotomy between invited and invented space of participation. Although it may be more problematic to use the case of Stellenbosch municipality to understand or preview situations in other parts of the country, the general tension between the centralising tendencies of the ANC and the call for stronger decentralisation from the ground is not something that is specific to the Western Cape. All over South Africa people have entered invited spaces, invented

their own, and taken to the streets in protest in order to be heard by both local and national government in their struggle for the realisation of civil, political *and* socio-economic rights.

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Appendix 1

Interviews

The list of interviews includes all interviews conducted during fieldwork, including those not referred to directly in the text. The interviewees have been anonymised and are referred to by the capacity in which they have been interviewed. In order to protect the identity of the interviewee the place of the interview has been left out.

Formal interviews

Municipal official 1, 29.10.2008

Municipal official 2, 20.11.2008

Municipal official 3, 20.11.2008

DA ward councillor 1, 04.11.2008

DA ward councillor 2, 04.11.2008

DA ward councillor 3, 10.11.2008

ANC councillor 1, 06.11.2008

ANC ward councillor 2, 06.11.2008

ANC ward councillor 3, 25.11.2008

Ward committee member 1, 12.11.2008

Ward committee member 2, 13.11.2008

Ward committee member 3, 13.11.2008

Ward committee member 4, 28.11.2008

Ward committee member 5, 19.11.2008

Ward committee member 6, 25.11.2008

Ward committee member 7, 28.11.2008

NGO 1, 25.11.2008

NGO2, 26.11.2008

CDW 1, 27.11.2008

CDW 2, 27.11.2008

CDW 3, 27.11.2008

Researcher 1, 19.11.2008

Consultations

Municipal official 4, 21.10.2008 & 27.11.2008

Sophie Oldfield, Professor at University of Cape Town, 15.10.2008

Francois Theron, Senior lecturer at Stellenbosch University, 20.10.2008

Attendance official meetings

IDP review meeting Town: wards 6,7,8,9,12 &16. 23.10.2008, Doornbosch Hall

IDP review meeting, Cloetesville: wards 10 & 11, 27.10.2008, Cloetesville ward offices

IDP review meeting Kayamandi: wards 13,14, & 15. 28.10.2008, Legacy Hall

Ward meeting ward 11, 13.11.2008

Appendix 2

Themes for interviews

The concept of public participation

Understanding of the concept "public participation"
Relative importance awarded to public participation
Challenges and opportunities from public participation
Identification of participatory structures in the community
Identification of legitimate structures and representatives

Spaces of participation

Relevant policies and their implementation
Identification of stakeholders and their role in public participation
Facilitation of participation by the municipality
Political context
The nature of local government spaces for participation
The scope of participation: agenda-setting, consultation or information?
Relationship between municipality and communities
Challenges for participating in invited space
Invented spaces?

Integrated Development Planning and ward-based planning

Understanding of the IDP process and ward-based planning
Public participation in IDP
Contribution to IDP process
Challenges and opportunities for IDP/ward plans
Identified needs through IDP/ward plans and reflection of these in final IDP and budget
Implementation of IDP/ward plans
Perceived results of participation
Contentious issues in the community
Communication from municipal administration to communities
Municipal capacity and relationship with provincial and national government

Ward committees

Understanding of the role of ward committee
Functions and powers of the ward committee
Representation on the ward committee
Capacity and influence of wards
Relationship between ward committee members and ward councillor
Relationship between ward committee/ward councillor and the community
Relationship between wards
Identification of stakeholders outside the ward committee and their relationship to the community, ward committee and municipal administration/council